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EUGENICS & POLITICS

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

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PLATO OR PROTAGORAS? 1908. Oxford.

"SCIENTIFIC DISCOVERY AND LOGICAL PROOF" in Singer's STUDIES IN THE HISTORY AND METHODS OF SCIENCE. Vol. I. 1917.

"HYPOTHESIS." In the same. Vol. II. 1921.

"WHY HUMANISM?" in CONTEMPORARY BRITISH PHILOSOPHY. Vol. I. 1924.

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EUGENICS & POLITICS

ESSAYS BY
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TO

MAJOR LEONARD DARWIN

WHOSE MELLOW WISDOM

HAS SO LONG GUIDED

THE EUGENICS EDUCATION SOCIETY

PREFACE

I CANNOT quite remember whether I was a eugenist before I read Plato's *Republic*, ever so many years ago; but I have been a convinced eugenist ever since. Now this is rather odd, for the *Republic* is certainly not set by pedants to the young in the Oxford Greats School in order to make converts to eugenics. I do not suppose that during its whole history a question has ever been set on this aspect of Plato's thought; but I can remember how severely I was once snubbed when I ventured to suggest to a professor of ancient history that a research into the eugenical aspects of ancient life might make a good subject to set for one of his Prize Essays. However, it all shows how dangerous it is to give impressionable youths great literature to read; they may not treat it merely as stuff to be got up for examination, and may even get new ideas from it!

Years afterwards, when the pernicious agitation was begun for making university scholar-

ships exclusively eleemosynary, which has now triumphed in the new statutes imposed on Oxford and Cambridge by the Royal Commission, I wrote an article, on "Eugenical Scholarships", against it in the *Oxford and Cambridge Review*. It attracted the attention of Mrs. Neville Rolfe, then the energetic secretary of the newly founded Eugenics Education Society. She promptly enlisted me, and much of the material composing this volume was contributed to the *Eugenics Review*.

It is the product of a hobby, the by-product of a busy academic life, and I am keenly aware that it does not form a systematic treatise. But the time is scarcely ripe for a systematic treatise on eugenics. It will be needed on the distant day when the question arises of putting into execution a well thought out scheme of eugenical reform: what is needed now is lighter literature to arouse interest in the subject, and a conviction of its vital import, and to prepare a receptive and appreciative audience for the biological expert if, and when, he descends from the Sinai of Science with the New Commandments which are to ensure our salvation by eugenics.

To this lighter literature this little volume may prove to be a humble contribution. It

must bespeak the reader's indulgence towards certain recurrences of the central thoughts which occur in it: it would have been easy to expunge them, but only by obliterating the instructive dates which punctuate the growth of new ideas and by losing the force which the unfamiliar gains from reiteration. I have therefore allowed them to stand in their appropriate contexts.

I am indebted to the President of the Eugenics Education Society, Major Leonard Darwin, for leave to use the material published in the *Eugenics Review* and to dedicate the volume to him; also to Dr. L. P. Jacks for leave to reprint the essay on "Eugenics and Politics" from the *Hibbert Journal*.

F. C. S. SCHILLER.

CORPUS CHRISTI COLLEGE,
OXFORD, *September* 1925.

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I

EUGENICS AND POLITICS

Politics is not a science but an art, or rather many arts. Eugenics, on the other hand, is still a science, or a branch of science. It is still studying the facts of biology and sociology, and learning to select those which are relevant to its aim of improving the intrinsic quality of human life. It has not yet succeeded in applying its knowledge to the working of human habits and institutions. But when it does succeed in winning its way to practical application, it is going to have a profound effect upon the arts of politics, and may entail extensive reconstruction of political ways and social structure.

Thus eugenics may be best conceived as the application of biology to social life, as a sort of social hygiene on a large scale; and, so taken, it seems destined to make trouble in a world which has long grown used to unhygienic, dirty ways. Its habits and traditions are profoundly anti-eugenical, and it is besides highly resistant

to new ideas. It will not be easy, therefore, to persuade the world how unhygienic its old ways are, nor how urgent it is to cleanse its Augean stables with scientific disinfectants, not only if it would progress and prosper, but even if it would survive.

I

Nevertheless, we must make the attempt; and, to begin with, let us radically disabuse our minds of the comfortable but enervating superstition that the human race is bound to progress, and that, however foolishly and criminally we may act, everything will in the end come right somehow, because evolution cannot go wrong. Science lends no support whatever to the easy-going optimism of this *a priori* fatalism. Progress is not a necessity either of thought or of nature. It is not a primary *law* of nature at all, but a complex result of a small episode in organic history, which happens to interest us greatly, and in which our ancestors took a prominent part. But there is nothing in the constitution of the universe, so far as we know, that guarantees the perpetual progress of human societies. On the contrary, the primary law of physical nature seems to be a universal tendency to degradation ; the ascent of organic life, or rather of a part of it, seems to have been achieved by struggling against a current of energy that is for ever flowing downwards.

This struggle, therefore, has to be continued; intermit it, rest on your oars, fail to devise new methods of coping with new dangers, and you subject yourself to the law of decay and extinction which has peopled our museums with the gaunt skeletons of the failures of the past.

Progress, therefore, is a paradox, and its persistence an accident, or perhaps a miracle, which is not adequately explained by the agency of any known intelligence. For though intelligence *is* a force that makes for betterment, it does not guarantee it; moreover, the human and animal intelligence we know is very stupid and shortsighted, and often aims amiss and mistakes the means to its ends. It is therefore extremely easy to frustrate the progressive tendencies, and there always is, and always has been, imminent danger of degeneration. This danger is actually enhanced in ages which are rapidly progressive on the whole. For while big readjustments are being achieved, it is easier for minor mal-adaptations to spring up and pass unnoticed, which may become serious, or even fatal, under the new conditions.

II

The existing condition of society affords many illustrations of this. European civilization has, in the last two hundred years, progressed with unexampled rapidity, and subjugated the forces

of nature to human purposes in a marvellous degree. But the process has not been all clear profit. It has obviously and admittedly engendered an industrial system which exploits men as if they were machines, and greatly aggravates some of the old evils of the social order. We are none of us likely to forget nowadays that there is a social problem, which concerns the relations of capital and labour. There is also an ethical problem, which concerns the discipline and control of the primitive pre-social instincts. These are everywhere recalcitrant, more or less, to the order of civilized society, and for ever threaten it with ruin. Both these problems loom so large that we are tempted to overlook, deep down at the very springs of life, still more fundamental relations of a biological sort, in which also the progress of civilization has produced mal-adjustments, fraught with tremendous possibilities.

A hundred years ago, when the thinkers of the human race were for the first time trying to assimilate in all its abstract clearness the fundamental law of organic fertility, and its bearings upon social progress, it is not too much to say that they were appalled by the prospect. The Malthusian law of population seemed to condemn the human race to a perpetual struggle with starvation, which could be mitigated only, and staved off for a time, by the systematic practice of murderous aggression.

To the more advanced and humane of thinkers, the only policy that suggested itself was a voluntary and artificial restriction of the output of greedy mouths clamouring to be fed.

After a hundred years, what has experience taught us ? Superficially, it may seem that Malthus was mistaken. Population has not outgrown the means of subsistence. At no period of its history has the human race been so numerous and has so small a percentage of it perished of starvation, war, and (probably) disease. But is all well in consequence in the best of all possible worlds, and was Malthusianism a false alarm ? By no means. Its predictions have been falsified, but it is not therefore false. A *good* prophecy of impending disaster always is falsified. For it acts as a warning, and stimulates to countermoves. The tendencies formulated in the Malthusian ' law ' of population continue to act ; but they may be counteracted at a price—even as I can raise my arm against the downward pull of gravitation, so long as my muscular strength endures. Thus the Malthusian prediction could fail, because human nature is actuated by a variety of motives, and the prediction itself, by foreseeing our danger, has enabled our forethought to avert it. Human nature is subject to other laws besides the Malthusian ; but they do not simplify the problem of human progress.

Nor has the prospect really grown less

alarming to the thoughtful. We may take it as proved, indeed, that human intelligence, at the level at which it has now reached, will not permit population to outgrow food-supply, but will endeavour either to increase food-supply or to restrict population. It is also true that population still continues to increase, and that while our stores of coal and oil and timber last, *i.e.* while we, as heirs of the ages, can prodigally waste the immense but not unlimited resources which defunct forms of life have accumulated, we shall probably contrive to live more amply and more easily.

III

But it is becoming clear to a growing number that the value of life cannot be estimated by its quantity with an entire disregard of its quality. It is not true that one man's life is as good as another's, and that all men are equal because they consume approximately the same quantities of the fruits of the earth. Science is quite clear that there is such a thing as natural nobility, and a biological content to the word 'well-born'. For some bodies are intrinsically better than others, stronger, fairer, healthier; and some minds are stronger, ampler, and happier than others. It is better to be born an Achilles than a Thersites, and a Plato than an idiot. Is it not worth while, therefore, to get for oneself, if possible,

one of these superior equipments for the purposes of living, or otherwise, to learn how to make the best and the most out of the bodily and mental qualities one is endowed with? That is one of the fundamental axioms on which the appeal of eugenics to the individual man securely rests. If moralists are at all accessible to new ideas, there is a new system of conduct to be built on this axiom.

It ought to appeal as much or more to the society in which the individual lives. For weaklings, wasters, fools, criminals, lunatics are not a blessing to any society. If their number increases to more than a minute percentage of the whole, they not only impose an intolerable burden on the saner and sounder elements in the society, but endanger the survival of the whole. However powerful, therefore, a society may be, and however great its resources, it is doomed if it so organizes itself as to breed the wrong sort of men and to favour the survival of the worthless at the expense of the more valuable. Any society which does these things is biologically a failure, a rebel against the laws of life, a foe to progress, a suicide that is contriving his own destruction; and even if its example should persuade and corrupt all other societies, it would not escape the penalty of its misdeeds. If the whole human race became involved in a revolt against the laws of life, the whole human race would simply become extinct.

It would go to join the dinosaurs and pterodactyls, and form one more example of a biological experiment that had gone wrong. Until the sons of Adam have contrived to graft the fruits of the Tree of Knowledge on to the Tree of Life, there is nothing in the course of Nature that guarantees to them any permanence beyond that of the beasts that have perished.

IV

Now what in point of fact have societies done in the past, and what are they doing in the present? Certainly not what is biologically right. They have not so organized themselves as to recruit themselves preferentially from the superior elements in their populations, or to augment the numbers and value of their natural nobilities. They have made no systematic and intelligent efforts at improving the human race or preventing its degeneration. They have, instead, long and persistently indulged in a number of anti-eugenical practices.[1]

It is anti-eugenical, for example, to indulge in more than a very limited amount of warfare. For though a successful inter-racial war may win for the victors room for expansion in cases where the vanquished are extirpated and not enslaved—and this hardly ever happened, even in primitive times, because slaves, and par-

[1] More technically 'dysgenical'.

ticularly female slaves, were always prized possessions—it must be remembered that warfare produces an increased death-rate in the fittest and most vigorous portion of a race, viz. its fighting men, so that, if it is persisted in, it must eliminate this portion, and end in racial degeneration.

The current versions of history, as a rule, ignore all this. The great ages of national adventure come, as a rule, after periods of recuperation that produce the heroes of the age that follows. It is an illusion that great men are the creatures of *their* times ; they are born and bred in the undistinguished era that preceded. The Elizabethans were born under Henry VIII., Edward VI., and Mary. The great Athenians of the fifth century were born before Athens tried to dominate Greece, and while she was growing men under the pacific rule of the Pisistratids. Imperial Athens exhausted the Athenian stock by two generations of warfare, and fell, never to rise again. The heroes of the French Revolution are all to be credited, biologically, to the *ancien régime*. The decadence of Spain and Portugal is most probably to be traced to the constant drain of the most enterprising men the race produced to America, Africa, and India.

Slavery is even more anti-eugenical than war, for it enables the inferior race to survive under the rule of conquerors, who often proceed

to eliminate themselves by internecine warfare. Egypt, India, China have been overrun by conquerors over and over again during the past three thousand years, but there has been hardly any change in the racial character of the bulk of the population. This is sufficiently explained by one of the great paradoxes of social history, viz. that it is usually the conquerors who die out, and the vanquished who take their place. For the conquerors naturally form the nobility, and though a nobility seems at first an institution in which society recognizes eugenical principles, it is apparently a consequence of civilization that a nobility never reproduces itself, and always tends to die out. The leading case here is that of the Roman patriciate. The decay of nobilities is doubtless due to a variety of causes—warfare, luxury, immorality, a higher standard of life and a lessened endurance of hardships; but it is impossible to blink the fact that it always attests a failure in social organization. It means that though society admires and delights to honour the qualities which it expects its nobility to exhibit, it yet has so ordered itself that it is always *dying off at the top* and continuously eliminating the possessors of these very qualities. So soon, therefore, as it is realized how in fact the institution works, it becomes clear that our nobility is as grotesque as anything in Samuel Butler's *Erewhon*, and that true statesmanship

would restrict its privileges to the worthless, in order to hasten their extinction.

V

It deserves, however, to be noted that this fatal ordering of society cannot always have existed. There must have been a time when the conditions of human life were such that the fitter survived and the unfitter did not, and when, in consequence, the human race was intrinsically and rapidly progressive; a time when personal superiority of brain and limb was essential to survival, and no social artifices availed to reverse the operation of natural selection. When that time was it is not easy to tell. It must have preceded the attainment of any high degree of civilization. For in any settled society there is so much progress rendered possible by the accumulation of tradition that native wits cease to be indispensable, and so much protection is extended to the feeble that they can propagate their kind, and indeed do so more copiously than their betters. So biological progress has probably come to an end, except in so far as we may have grown more resistant to the microbes that swarm where men do congregate, and less susceptible to the charms of alcohol by the self-elimination of congenital drunkards.

In barbarism, on the other hand, the conditions

are apparently sometimes so severe that to survive a man must have the support of an adequate band of his own kin, and descendants of the strong, of chieftains, nobles, and so forth, survive better than the common herd ; and in quite savage times, no doubt, the superior tribe that gobbled up its enemies (or their food-supply) would have a biological advantage over another that enslaved them. Cannibalism becomes a social danger only when the taste for human flesh it generates preys upon the tribe itself, and the warriors improvidently devour their own women and children. But however this may have been, it is certain that at *some* time personal and intrinsic superiority must have been decisive of survival. In no other way is it conceivable that the human race should have acquired those adjustments which render it superior to the apes, and more particularly its enormous superiority in massiveness of brain. There must have been a time when brain-power really was a vital necessity, when only the ablest could make a living, and when the feeble-minded were sternly weeded out. Probably this happened so long ago that hardly any record of an anterior state of things has come down to us. The fragments of *Pithecanthropus erectus* from Java, the jaw of *Homo heidelbergensis* from the Mauer sands, and (perhaps) the Piltdown skull recently recovered from the gravels of the Sussex Ouse,

alone seem to antedate this decisive development, which generated modern man. Since these earliest palæolithic times there has been apparently no growth in human brain capacity. Even the Neanderthal race, though it has perhaps perished without descendants, had quite as much brain as modern man, and contrived to live among hardships that would have daunted most of us.[1]

In the main, then, sociological development has superseded physiological as the foundation of social progress, and we need not doubt that this, on the whole, has been a gain; but it has incidentally brought into being the phenomenon of social *contra-selection* and the elimination of the fit.

VI

Now to this contention it is plausible to reply that the further back this phenomenon is traced, the less alarming it becomes. If, physiologically, man has been stationary or retrograde for so long, this only shows how unimportant physiological efficiency is to his social welfare. If, in spite of the elimination of the fit, the supply of proper leaders of the race has never failed, this shows that it does no mortal damage. If social selection proceeds upon different lines from natural selection, and mitigates and undoes its brutalities, this only shows that we have hit

[1] Cf. Sollas, *Ancient Hunters.*

upon something higher than natural selection, or perhaps a higher form of it. Anyhow, it is all an old, old story, and there is nothing novel or alarming about it.

Unfortunately these retorts do not quite suffice. In the first place, there must sooner or later come a point at which social progress can no longer compensate for physiological degeneration, but is arrested by it. If a race becomes progressively feebler in body and mind, it must sooner or later arrive at a condition in which the best doctors cannot save it from the microbes, and the best teachers cannot implant into the young duffers of the next generation the knowledge needed to save society, even if it could still produce good teachers and good doctors. And, moreover, there has appeared a new fact of serious import. So long as self-elimination was, like the *harakiri* of the Japanese nobles, a privilege of the few, and a mark of social superiority granted to a small fraction of one per cent of the community, the requisite supply of ability might be drawn from other classes. But what if all the classes that have hitherto produced ability should begin to die out under the conditions of modern civilization ? There is much reason to suppose that this is what is happening, as many have doubtless learnt from the classical researches of Mr. and Mrs. Whetham in their remarkable book, *The Family and the Nation.*

The evidence goes to show that throughout the most valuable part of the nation, not only in the upper classes but also in the middle classes and in the best parts of the working classes, the birth-rate per marriage has in a generation sunk from four and a half to two, and is now only half the size required to keep up the numbers in those classes. In other words, society is now so ordered that in every generation it sheds one-half of the classes it itself values most highly, and supplies their places with the offspring of the feeble-minded and casual-labourer classes, whose families still average more than seven. What seriously aggravates the evil is the whole trend of social legislation. Social reform costs money, and the money is raised by taxation, which bears very hardly on the middle classes, who cannot curtail luxuries like the rich, and will not lower their standard of comfort. They meet the extra expense, therefore, by further postponing the age of marriage, and further reducing their output of children. One of the chief effects, therefore, of endeavours to improve social conditions by our present methods is to deteriorate the race. And they do this in a twofold manner : they eliminate the middle class, and they promote the survival of the unfit and defective.

It is evident that both processes may easily assume the dimensions of a national calamity.

If social arrangements are made whereby the unfit are liberated from the pressure of natural selection, and are permitted to multiply without restraint at the public expense, it is likely that their numbers will continuously increase. It is stated that the State of New York already spends one-seventh, and sometimes as much as one-fifth, of its revenues on the support of its defectives, and there is no reason why it should not have to spend the whole of it in this unedifying way, if the social policy which has led to this result is persisted in, or why the community should not come to consist wholly of idiots, lunatics, and epileptics. For something closely analogous to Gresham's Law will operate ; there will be more demand for the cheaper man than for the more precious, and the bad stocks will push out the good. The rapid fall of the birth-rate among the more provident classes of the community is but the beginning of a process which may lead to the practical elimination of the middle classes.

To whom, then, shall we look either to make good the gaps in the upper ranks of society in which the guiding minds must be found, or to man the professions which carry on the ordinary brain work which is needed, and provide the organization and direction required for the efficiency of manual labour ? To illustrate how directly this question bears on national welfare, we need merely inquire how the army is to get

on without officers. The present shortage of officers has, no doubt, been aggravated by a variety of causes, but, at bottom, it is largely a biological phenomenon. The families with military traditions, in which the sons hereditarily went into the army and provided the best officers, are no longer large enough to yield an adequate supply of men. Nor will the State get them by offering more pay and less work. It cannot get them, because they exist no longer, and it is doubtful even if it will get inferior men from other families. For the same process is affecting the other professions also. Even the clergy can no longer be relied on to furnish a supply of capable and ambitious youth who will distinguish themselves in every walk of life.

VII

It is perfectly possible, therefore, to tax the middle classes out of existence. Indeed, it has been done. History exhibits a great object-lesson in the decline of the Roman empire. This appears to have been mainly due to an unscientific system of taxation which crushed the middle class and left no breeding ground for ability and ambition between the millionaire nobles, who had nothing to rise to, and the pauperized masses, who had no chance of rising. Consequently, the empire had to take from without its borders the men it needed to conduct

its military and civil administration. The barbarians alone could furnish the men to run the empire, and consequently the barbarians inevitably came to overrun the empire. Modern civilization seems inclined to repeat this blunder, and, if so, it is courting the same doom, if it can find barbarians virile and intelligent enough to overrun it. If not, the situation is by so much worse than formerly for the future of humanity.

It is worse also in this, that the elimination of the fit, owing to social mal-adjustment, is much more effective than formerly, and penetrates much deeper into the 'lower' classes. In former times these contained and conserved considerable stocks of ability, which multiplied freely, but, owing to the rigid organization of society, were not able to rise. Now it has been made so much easier for the able to ascend our educational and industrial ladders that rise they can, and do. But their ascent drains the lower classes of their congenitally able members, and so diminishes the prospect of further supplies from the same source. Secondly, the restriction of the birth-rate has already affected the superior artisan class quite as much as the classes above them. Hence, even if we grant that as good material can be produced in this class as in the professions, the quantity will not suffice. The damning fact remains that society recruits itself preferentially from among its

worst constituents. And if it is remembered further that one-quarter of the existing population normally produces more than one-half of the next generation, it is evident that if this more prolific quarter be inferior in quality, great changes in the biological value and composition of a society may occur with startling rapidity.

VIII

The same phenomenon is observable all over the civilized world; it is not quite so bad in Germany as yet, but worse in France and in America. What does it mean? It means a rapid and progressive diminution in the output of ability. It means a necessary decline of all those pursuits that demand a supply of ability. It means a degeneration of the European race. It may mean the collapse of civilization. It certainly means incomparably the gravest problem now confronting the political wisdom of the civilized world. It means that however old-fashioned politicians may shrink from facing it, and however platitudinously they may continue to prate about their party nostrums and catchwords, eugenics has become the most momentous issue in politics.

The problem is essentially a social one. It is not one to be solved by individual initiative or individual action, though, of course, it is equally clear that it cannot be solved without

the co-operation of individuals. For the individual is helpless against social conventions; and, in effect, society already prescribes whom he shall (or shall not) marry, when and under what conditions and penalties in every class, and leaves him only limited and largely illusory freedom of choice.

Nor is it an easy problem for society to solve. For it has here to work upon and through the feelings of individuals, and in matters where its behests are hard to enforce and particularly easy to evade. If it succeeds in reorganizing itself on eugenical lines, it will only be by making use of a multitude of expedients, and by dint of forethought and much diplomatic skill. Rough and ready legislation will be worse than useless. In short, our legislators and political thinkers will have to think more earnestly and seriously than they have done for the past two thousand years, with a greater disrespect of the traditions and conventions of political philosophy.

To begin with, they might fittingly be summoned to repent them of the evil they have wrought so long, and to remember that their blunders have often been more mischievous than crimes.

IX

Having thus fostered a due humility in them, we might ask them to contemplate a

fundamental fact of social life, which Western civilization has never properly appreciated, and is now in danger of forgetting altogether. It is simply this, that *the biological unit of human life is neither the individual nor the State, but the family.*

It follows that the first condition of social prosperity is an organization which is biologically sound, and that Individualism and Socialism are both profoundly wrong, and dangerous to human survival, if they cannot satisfy this first condition.

Now, from a biological point of view, the individual is a problem, an indispensable but dangerous force, to be controlled and guided in its operations. Fortunately he is almost helpless by himself, and so becomes amenable to social control. He has to be taught that he is not an end in himself; his happiness and perpetuation are secondary, and he should learn his duty and his place. His proper place, whether for the male or the female, is that of a vehicle, a functionary entrusted with the transmission (or otherwise) of the hereditary qualities (good or bad) of his germ plasm. He is essentially a creature to be tamed and used; but he should be coaxed and cajoled, enveloped and impelled by the pervasive pressure of the social atmosphere, rather than coerced, lest he should revolt, or his spirit be broken. One of the essential flaws of Socialism, from this

biological standpoint, lies in its handling of the individual, whom it cannot really catch and tame ; he easily slips through the vast meshes of the social net.

The moral of history uniformly is that State control is never a success. It either fails, as in Greece, to be subtle and strong enough to meet the individual's evasions, or else, as in the Orient and Peru, it crushes him, and so deprives itself of the strong men that can control the social system, and steer the ship of State through the storms of circumstance. It is perfectly futile in practice to preach State Socialism in the hope of curbing individual selfishness. You may breed in this way astute exploiters of social machinery for their private ends, but never self-sacrificing citizens. Oxford has tried it for the past forty or fifty years, with indifferent success.

X

The truth is that our political philosophy is quite antiquated and unscientific. It has been too servile an imitation of Greek models. Now I would not hint any disparagement of Greek genius. But our admiration for it will do us more harm than good, unless it is critical. It should be remembered also by our political theorists that Plato and Aristotle were not the only Greeks. Both Plato and Aristotle adopted

highly socialistic theories of the best social order. But they were not typical. Their theories represent an indignant protest against Greek practice. For the great bulk of the Greeks were by nature individualists of a rather unbridled sort. The artistic temperament was probably commoner among them than it has ever been before or since. But the artistic temperament is a very doubtful blessing from the point of view of social organization. It is antinomian, scornful of the humdrum, impatient of discipline, liable to emotionalism, full of vanity. It does not run well in any sort of harness, either in public or in private life. Nor is an æsthetic estimation of conduct, praise of the 'beauty' of self-sacrifice, and disapproval of the 'ugliness' of anti-social action an adequate substitute for the lack of a sense of duty.

And well the Greeks themselves knew their own weakness. That was why they cherished such an intense admiration for 'moderation', and made the repression of emotional excess, the arduous recognition of self-imposed limits, the foundation of their art. It was the reason, too, why they adored the inhuman discipline of Sparta, even though it had succeeded only by eradicating from its citizens nearly all the qualities which were specifically Greek.

Nor was the artistic temperament the only reason why the city-state failed to control the

individual Greek. It had tried to do too much, and in its jealousy had weakened and loosened the other bonds that hold society together. Especially it had weakened the family, and so increased the individual's natural licence. It will probably be conceded, even by the most uncritical advocates of Hellenism, that in matters that pertain to the sexual and family relations the Greeks do not yield models it is well for us to imitate. It should also be noted that Greek theory does not here supply a corrective to Greek practice. The Athenian family may have been as great a failure as Plato implies, but his methods of ending it seem distinctly crude, and his alternative scheme, despite its recognition of eugenics, is hardly calculated to achieve its end. The other philosophers, who nearly all abstained from marriage because it interfered with 'contemplation', or, like Socrates,[1] courted failure by marrying too late, were not indeed so extreme in their hostility to the family as Plato, but they did as little to rehabilitate it in theory as in practice. In short, the Greeks have conspicuously failed to grasp the social function of the family,[2] and any political philosophy

[1] It would seem at about 55, if Plato's *Phaedo* can be trusted.

[2] In the reflective stage of their development. Before that there was, of course, a period when a chieftain's rule rested, like Priam's, on the number and vigour of his sons, and until the fifth century B.C. the history of the Greek cities appears to have been essentially that of their leading families.

that relies exclusively on Hellenic inspiration fails in like fashion.

XI

Yet the family is the only mechanism in which human wit has ever contrived that has attractiveness enough to bind the individual's caprice to travel in regular orbits, and to build up an orderly society out of the gravitation of social units. It is a successful mechanism just because it is so much more than a mechanism. It is a biological necessity and a psychological craving, and a training ground for every development of ethical, spiritual, and economic life. The family lies at the roots both of the school and of the factory and of the Church, though all these institutions have sometimes grown into unnatural forms which injure and repudiate their origin. I remember that when I was an undergraduate we were once set an essay by Jowett, the great Master of Balliol, on the Origin of our Moral Ideas, and embarked on a great variety of theories, without pleasing the Master, who at the end delivered himself of the dictum: "the fact is that our moral ideas originate in the nursery". We then thought it a terribly unphilosophic come-down from the altitudes of metaphysics, but most of us have probably realized by now how profoundly true it is. Moral education, the moulding of individuals into conformity with social

requirements, *must* begin in the nursery, and it will make no slight difference whether this early training is conducted well or ill. And it is no less important to guide the child's first steps aright towards the secular and religious knowledge it will need to make its way through life. No State machinery will ever be as satisfactory in these respects as a good family; for no State machinery will be so potent. It will not touch the individual's life so closely and constantly, nor yet so lovingly; even quite an inferior family would be superior to the finest public institution. Consider, for example, what a nightmare life would be for the children subjected to the training of Plato's *Republic*, and how inevitably the polished hypocrites his education would turn out would be lacking in those very moral qualities he proposed to destroy the family to secure!

If, then, a State wants good citizens, the best thing it can do is keep the family in sound condition. At present this is not being done, and it is ominous that the family is being attacked and undermined from many sides. To the individualist it seems an unbearable restraint on the lawlessness of passion. He demands freedom to realize himself, *i.e.* to do as he pleases without regard for the consequences to any one. To the Socialist the family is no less obnoxious; it seems such a sturdy centre of resistance to the pulverization of

the minor social structures for the greater glory of a State that dreams of composing a coherent order out of a dust-heap of undistinguished and indistinguishable individuals, which the breath of a majority, or of a ' machine ', can blow whithersoever it listeth. He will always impugn it as a hotbed of individualistic selfishness, because it is an obstacle to the realization of *his* ends. To the feminist it seems a symbol of the bondage of woman to the service of the race. It does not appear to have been considered that if the emancipation of women means (incidentally) a refusal to bear children, only those societies will survive which do *not* emancipate their women, and only those women will become mothers who dissent practically from the prevalent opinion.

XII

To an evolutionist, however, it will not seem credible that an institution will succumb to such puny attacks which has grown up under the hardships of primitive life and weathered the storms of man's lurid past, and is now so intimately intertwined with the chief biological, psychological, and social needs of humanity. Not that he will on this account either demand the suppression of blasphemers against the family or assume the attitude of a *non possumus* conservatism. He will incline to the belief that

the best cure for lawlessness is biological instruction, and that with a fair field and no favour natural selection will vindicate the family. Recalcitrants against it should not be forcibly prevented, therefore, from dying out. If left to themselves they will do so, perhaps with pleasure to themselves, certainly with profit to the community. He will even see some good in legislative interference which, though intended to break up the cohesion and continuity of families, like the death duties, operates to knit more closely together those families of which the members can trust each other's morals sufficiently to combine to frustrate the law.

As regards the future, it is always well to be chary of predictions. But just because the family is natural, and has evolved, it may be expected to evolve still further under eugenical auspices. For this very reason the scientifically minded eugenist will doubt whether the law does well to attribute an equal sanctity and value to all families, and to put the worst on a par with the best, to regard sterile unions as no less precious and indissoluble than fertile, and to bestow the right to found a family indiscriminately. He will protest, however, that the State has by no means done its duty by the family. It has put artificial and needless obstacles in the way of the survival of the best, and has done this under the influence of anti-

quated theories which are biologically false. It has been inspired in its action by individualistic, socialistic, or ecclesiastical influences, all too innocent of science. All these influences could not, of course, help evincing some perception of the fundamental principles of human welfare, but, as their knowledge was inadequate, their effect has been largely anti-eugenical.

There is no saying, therefore, how powerful an instrument of good the family may not become, if the ultimate aim of statesmanship is conceived, not as the meaningless triumph of abstractions like 'the State' and 'the' individual, but as such an ordering of society as will tend to the survival of the better families, that is, *stocks*, rather than of the worse, and to the elimination, as smoothly and painlessly as can be arranged, of those which are diseased or defective or tainted. For much may thus already be done to arrest the physiological decay of the human race, and (perhaps) to promote its development into a higher type, while the knowledge which is needed for attempting what is at present impracticable can only accrue from the experience of eugenical experiments.

XIII

It is, however, too much to expect at present that the warnings of eugenists will be generally heeded. No moral reformation is ever popular,

no far-sighted plan is ever widely understood. The inertia of habit and stupidity is always slow to move, and the opposition of those whose interests or prejudices are affected is always bitter. It is likely enough, therefore, that in many societies (democracies especially) nothing will be done. It may well be, even, that the European race as a whole will reject eugenics, and show itself incapable of the foresight, discipline, and self-control which the adoption of a eugenical policy will involve. That, however, will not settle the matter. The European race, in that case, will demonstrate its foolishness and will ruin itself; its glory and pre-eminence will depart. It is quite conceivable that in a couple of hundred years' time not only the Japanese and Chinese but also the Negro may be the superior in sheer intellect of the degenerate European. For the appeal of science is universal, and will be transferred to those races which have, from time immemorial, builded their social structures on the family as their foundation, if they can resist the contagion of our follies.

There are at present in existence two great social schemes which have shown great vitality and power of endurance, and attained a high degree of civilization. One of these is (as yet) pacific and industrial, the other military; but both agree in regarding the family as the essential unit of social life. I refer, of course, to

China and Japan. Both these states have in our day undergone enormous revolutions, and are still confronted with stupendous problems in adjusting their economic and moral order to the new situations created for them by the contact of an aggressive civilization which was technically their superior. It seems probable enough that their intelligence and statesmanship will succeed in assimilating the technical methods and material and military advantages of Western science, but no one as yet can hazard a guess as to what will be the spiritual effects of Europeanization on the fabric of their beliefs and institutions. But if these can be adjusted to the new knowledge, if science can be absorbed without destroying the moral unity of the family, if the ancestor-worship of the animist can be developed into the descendant-worship of the eugenist, one can see no reason why there should not be prognosticated for both of them a rosier future and a more assured continuance than for our European societies, if these latter yield to the pressure of those, whether called individualists or militarists, who tempt them to their destruction.

For Nature, after all, recks little of the catchwords of our pride and politics. It acknowledges no 'superiority' in the ways and ideas of those who are not willing or able to survive, and it is human ideals and ends which have to give way and to practise evasions to

attain realization, when they collide with the elemental necessities. ' Democracy ', ' freedom ', ' self-realization ', ' civilization ', nay ' society ' itself, are but snares for fools, if they beguile us into revolts against the primary laws which were established in the beginnings of life. A social order which endorses such revolts commits a crime against life which is certain to avenge itself. Moreover, the suicide of a society always destroys the innocent with the guilty, the sane and healthy with those of unsound mind and perverted feeling. *Quem vult perdere deus prius dementat*, and unfortunately our Hellenistic political philosophy exhibits all the marks of senile dementia and progressive paranoia.[1]

[1] This essay, which appeared in the *Hibbert Journal* for January 1914, has not been rewritten in the light of the catastrophe which was so speedily to ensue. For it seemed too clearly to anticipate the suicidal possibilities lurking in European civilization.

II

NATIONAL SELF-SELECTION [1]

So far as our science can at present see, three great principles have gone to the making of our world. They may be called Habit, Variation, and Selection.

I

Of these the first is the fundamental tendency of the persistence of that which is, in whatever way it may have come into being. Its extent and importance may be gauged by the facts that all the so-called 'laws of nature' may be regarded most simply as just the habits of the things that are said to 'obey' them. All things have habits (good or bad) and are the creatures of habits, and that is why we may trust them to behave in an orderly (*i.e.* stable and predictable) manner and can adjust our actions accordingly. Without Habit there would be no cosmic order.

It is clear then that Habit is essential: it

[1] Appeared in the *Eugenics Review* for April 1910.

is the static principle, conservative of the existing order, in default of which the cosmos would revert to chaos. But by itself it would be the acme of dullness and incurable fatality; for its preserves all things alike; it does not by itself lead to anything new or better, nor permit us to regard the world as a progressive evolution.

Luckily, however, its effects are everywhere modified by a principle of innovation, which seems essentially intrusive and revolutionary, and, if unchecked, would baffle all our efforts and predictions. This principle we may most conveniently entitle Variation. Variation means essentially departure from the established types of happening, and as such it is the source of all novelty. But novelty as such is also intrinsically incalculable, and therefore so troublesome to science that, from a strictly official point of view, Science declines to recognize it. It is ' chance ', and chance cannot be real; it must be only from our human ignorance that we fail to calculate out the intricate results of the known ' laws ' or habits. On the other hand, this narrowly pedantic view of what is theoretically admissible, is open to objection on the ground that it rules out the possibility that these apparently ' chance' variations may be due to laws or habits we have not yet ascertained, or to purposive determination by an intelligence we have not yet

discovered. We need not, however, here consider whether the scientific postulate that 'chance' is illusion really exhausts the matter; for in the actual state of our knowledge it is undeniable that we have *in practice* to make allowance for a real element of 'chance' in our calculations, however we may speculate about its origin. It is undeniable that the course of events as it appears to us is *not* wholly determined by routine laws—that every day, nay, every minute, brings a trace of something new, unforeseen, incomparable and irreparable. For all her 'uniformity' Nature never repeats herself, and it seems that somewhere at her core there must be an exuberant well-spring of novelty that irrigates the dull expanses of routine.

But at first sight this Variation does not seem to have any determinate character. It pours forth novelties of all sorts, large and small, good, bad, and indifferent, with so lavish a profusion that no definite purpose can be traced in them. The variations seem fortuitous, and are taken as such by Science, which regards a chance-distribution as the most acceptable, because it is the simplest and can, in a way, be predicted by the calculus of probabilities. Or, if this treatment does not satisfy us, we may say, with William James,[1] that such over-production is itself a law or habit of our universe. "Every-

[1] *A Pluralistic Universe*, p. 316.

thing is smothered in the litter that is fated to accompany it. Without too much, you cannot have enough, of anything. Lots of inferior books, lots of bad statues, lots of dull speeches, of tenth-rate men and women, as a condition of the few precious specimens in either kind being realized. The gold dust comes to birth with the quartz sand all round it." True, most true ; but is it anything even a philosopher could call rational ? Surely the world must contain also contrivances for ridding itself of the superfluity of rubbish it engenders. It must contain apparatus for fool-killing, scavenging and purifying itself ; for discerning the precious and preferring it. And of course it does, if we will but see it.

The remedy for the indiscriminate production of variations lies in the third great factor that makes our world, which we have called Selection. Selection implies rejection, and the preferential survival of the things selected, and is the great and characteristic procedure of our intelligence. But it, or something like it, also goes on spontaneously, and apparently without intelligence ; for of the multitudinous variations which occur, only an infinitesimal proportion are able to maintain themselves, and grow stereotyped by habit into new forms of being. We call this process *Natural* Selection, denying that it means intelligence, because we do not choose to regard it as an adaptive response to

the unceasing changes and enormous risks with which existence is beset.[1] Science has conceived so deep a horror of the futile teleology of theology, which ascribed the world-order to intelligence only in order to declare impious the inquiry into its nature, motives, and ends, that it dares not go beyond half-hearted concessions to the obvious facts that wherever there is Selection there is intelligence, and wherever there is intelligence there is selection, and that an orderly world can only be constituted and maintained in being by the constant operation of Selection.

II

The human intellect can only recognize alien intelligences by their likeness to itself. And as its own operations are throughout selective, Selection becomes the deepest and surest mark of the presence of intelligence. Everywhere we discriminate, the good from the bad, the useful from the worthless, the true from the false, the pleasant from the painful, etc. etc. What we prefer, we pick out and set apart; what we reject, we ignore and discard and destroy. From the first efforts of the baby's nascent mind to control the unfamiliar organism of its body and to set in order the confused

[1] For the idea that the apparent profusion of nature is an adaptive response to the amount of destructive waste, cf. R. Goldscheid, *Darwin als Lebenselement unserer modernen Kultur*. Wien. Hugo Heller, 1909, p. 34 foll., 64, etc.

flux of its impressions, to the highest degrees of specialistic concentration which social interests permit and require, the Law of Selection operates to extract the valuable out of a vaster mass of unutilizable material. The baby moves at random, but repeats only those movements which lead to satisfactory results; the man concentrates himself upon whatever function by performing which the social order assures his livelihood. In either case there is abundance of experiment, of failure, of apparent waste; but by continuous selection order somehow emerges out of chaos.

III

Now would it not be strange if the procedure which operates throughout the functions of the individual's life did not in any way extend to the internal readjustments which alter the nature of a social aggregate? Societies are surely subject to the Law of Natural Selection as wholes, just as are their individual members.

By pursuing a policy, a society, like an individual, can save or destroy itself, and in either case the difference will depend on the ends it chooses and the intelligent adjustment of means thereto. Why should it not be possible, therefore, for a society to operate similarly upon its own constituents? Why should it not determine its own composition,

the sort of members it considers good and the means by which it may obtain them, and then take steps to assure itself of their production? The thing is doubtless difficult because social problems are so complex and momentous, because any error will affect the welfare of so many; but there seems to be no reason why it should be pronounced impossible *a priori*. It is admitted that we all live under the Law of Natural Selection, but it is obvious that we are constantly transforming and supplementing it by the law of intelligence, by the selection of the good or valuable. The individual does not merely take things as they come and accept their consequences; he does not scorn to take thought for the morrow, to set before himself aims to realize and to ponder on the means available; neither does the statesman assume a merely passive policy with regard to the effects of national rivalry or of the forces of Nature. Why then should he uncomplainingly accept the social material as it comes, the uncontrolled output of random breeding? Why should he regard it as lying beyond his province to devise means by which the national stock may be improved or prevented from deteriorating? Especially as he is called upon, in ever-growing measure, to provide for the sustenance, health, and education of the social personnel which is recruited in so fortuitous a fashion.

That the negative answer to such questions

is not rational is suggested by the facts that national self-selection is in point of fact continually going on, that nations are actually so organized as to promote the development of certain qualities and their possessors, and to handicap and extinguish certain other qualities, and that among the qualities selected in a community many are so favoured because (rightly or wrongly) they are judged to be *good*, while the hostile discrimination against others is avowedly based on the belief that they are *bad*. Contrast, for example, the honours and rewards, paid to virtuous and heroic deeds in every society, with the penalties inflicted on evil-doing. Every society does in point of fact strive to make hard the way of the transgressor, smooth that of the social saviour. It is not, therefore, to advocate any new and unheard-of principle to demand that this social selection should be more efficient, systematic, and intelligent than actually it is.

IV

For at present nations are so imperfectly organized that the process of social selection is as a whole unsystematic and haphazard. The right of selection is largely left to individuals, with the idea, presumably, that the interplay of individual egotisms will issue in social benefits. But the individuals are not taught that by

their private choices of what is pleasant or conducive to their personal purposes they are moulding, and perhaps altering, the nature of the nation which supports them. They have not in consequence any consciousness of social responsibility in the exercise of their tastes. The London business man who prefers Sunday golf to a sermon is not aware that he is thereby contributing to the survival of the caddy as against the preacher, nor does the man who buys a ticket for musical comedy instead of for a play of Shakespeare realize that he is aiding the degradation of artistic taste, nor is the ordinary citizen conscious that by attending race meetings he may accelerate, and by attending meetings of the Eugenics Society he may arrest, the decadence of his country. There is, in short, very little reflection on the social consequences of individual preferences.

Yet individual thoughtfulness, such as it is, is far greater than collective. Collectively the nation, and those who profess to consider its interests, do not seem to think at all. Else it would hardly happen that the ends aimed at in the national self-selection should be so often incapable of withstanding the least reflection, and that the means adopted should so often defeat the ends in view. The collective stupidity even of the most intelligent and civilized societies is stupendous. They seem habitually to organize themselves so as to foster what they

detest and to destroy what they admire. A society will profess to believe in human equality, and yet maintain enormous differences of social position. It will destroy distinctions of rank, and thereby leave the field open for the most insidious and irresponsible form of power, that of plutocracy. Its democratic jealousy will debar the upper classes from all access to honourable and useful careers of social service, and it will thereupon complain of the idle rich. It will try to cure poverty by almsgiving, and to restrain animalism by preaching celibacy. It will turn the law into the most powerful engine of injustice. It will organize churches for the promotion of the religious spirit, and be astonished when they proceed to fossilize, and crush it. It will set up professional teachers of various branches of knowledge, and permit their pedantry and futile formalism to make every form of learning seem detestable, and then will join them in deploring the laziness of youth. It will set up schools for the teaching of games and make these compulsory, while work becomes optional. It will make all its games professional, and turn all its professions into games for dilettanti. It would serve no purpose, but that of exasperation, to record the whole series of social miscarriages, but we may finally instance as the supreme example of social fatuity the fact that in all civilized societies the rate of reproduction is lowest in

the highest and highest in the lower (though not always in the very lowest) classes. For what does this mean but that the social order operates so as to weed out the very qualities which it deems most valuable ?

The natural result is that though there is an enormous amount of self-selection continually going on in societies, now favouring one set of qualities and now another, there is no unity of plan or purpose controlling the whole, and consequently no definite tendency or intelligent direction. Hence the whole process is of the lower and non-intelligent type which we call Natural Selection, and is not consciously selective. Man does not exercise the same intelligent control over his own development as he does over that of the other beings (such as cultivated plants and domesticated animals) in whom he is interested. He is not yet master and maker of his own destiny.

V

And yet he does not fail from lack of power. Society as a whole (and every member thereof) is continually interfering with and controlling the activities of individuals, and moulding them and altering their relative positions. It is always exacting from them much conformity to its ideals. For it has ideals, though they are often inconsistent. It trains its members

to become gentlemen and sportsmen and clergymen and what not, according to certain regulation patterns, and woe betide those who are refractory. And it also changes its ideals. The mediæval saint and knight are types as extinct as the ichthyosaurus and the mastodon. The trouble is that its ideals always rest upon insufficient reflection and knowledge and upon partial insight, and that they are unrelated to one another and to any consistent plan of the best life. Hence, the social influences brought to bear on the individual, being unco-ordinated and at cross purposes, largely neutralize one another, and the best defence of individualism lies in the impotence and folly displayed in collective enterprises.

But is this a sufficient defence of the existing chaos? Are we still collectively too stupid and too ignorant to think out a consistent scheme of a good life which a nation can safely enjoin on its members? If so, it might certainly be better to let 'nature', meaning thereby the existing habits of things, blindly take its course, than to attempt to direct it. But against this policy we may fairly cite the fact that no one really and consistently believes in complete *laisser faire*. Every one believes that there are *some* things which intelligence can regulate, in which we can improve on Nature's ways, and can discern the better from the worse. Even Christian Scientists and Peculiar People, though

they think it wrong to summon a doctor, do not think it wrong to interfere with the course of disease. They pray, appealing from the doctor to the Deity, and are not as consistent as the Druses, who eschew prayer as an impertinent interference with Divine wisdom. Even anarchists, though they object to government, do not think it right to follow every passing impulse. In general there is a great mass of practically universal agreement as to what behaviour is good and what bad. The minorities which approve of the more atrocious forms of anti-social conduct, murder, robbery, dishonesty, profligacy, cruelty, intolerance, are so small and insignificant that universal consent may fairly be said to condemn them.

VI

All we need ask, therefore, is that society should not content itself with merely verbal reprobation of such acts, nor undo the salutary effects of its disapproval by simultaneously fostering this same conduct by others of its institutions. The accepted ideals can, and should, be made efficient. At present we do not live up even to the light we have. It is inconsistent, *e.g.*, to treat infanticide as murder, and to acquiesce in the existing infant death-rate of our workhouses; to bring in habitually verdicts of 'temporary insanity',

and yet to retain barbarous legislation against suicide; to make duelling illegal and (as in Germany) to enforce a code of 'honour' which requires it. It is inconsistent, further, to condemn theft and to encourage it by the laxity of company laws, to advocate forestry and to tax it out of existence, to believe in hereditary excellence and to frustrate the multiplication of the fit, to adore genius in the abstract and to crush it out in the concrete, to recognize the necessity for progress and to devise no means for discriminating between the social reformer and the criminal. It is true, no doubt, that the world is made *for* the average man; but the average man should never be allowed to forget that it was not made *by* him, and that if left to his own devices he would rot in the ruts of routine.

Theoretically, therefore, it is an ideal, which every society should set before itself and inculcate into its members, to conceive a social order which will ever be intent to maximize the good and to minimize the bad in the conditions of human existence. And having conceived this ideal, it should consciously strive to realize it, ordering all its institutions and selecting all its types so as to provide it.

It will not, however, be necessary to work this ideal out theoretically in its minutest details, both because it will suffice if the right course to be followed can be seen a few steps

ahead, and because it will always be essential to keep the ideal elastic, so that it can be adjusted to any growth in knowledge in the course of experience. To be of practical value a social ideal must differ from those of nearly all Utopians in two essential particulars: (1) It must be from the outset intended for a *progressive* world, and so must itself be capable of progressive self-correction and improvement, and (2) it must be applicable to the existing order and must not postulate to start with a revolution in human nature and institutions, as a preliminary to its exercising any influence.[1] For the operation of any ideal must necessarily begin upon the actual order; hence its application to the actual will have to be gradual and discreet. For it is folly to ignore the potency of Habit; the inertia of ages cannot be undone in the day of reckoning.

VII

Of course such a programme must expect to be beset with difficulties and objections, and this paper would be futile if it made no attempt to anticipate them.

(1) I will begin, therefore, with the objection that the Social Order, which we may fitly term

[1] By both these criteria Plato's *Republic* is condemned as hopelessly impracticable. Mr. H. G. Wells stands alone in perceiving the need for progressiveness, though even he would probably fail to secure it by the institutions of his *Utopia*.

the Eugenic, will necessarily involve a tyrannical oppression of the individual, and be destructive of all individual initiative ; because the Eugenical State, having adopted its ideal of the good life once for all, will crush out all nonconformity.

I am particularly sensitive to this objection because I am not ashamed to be called an individualist, though of course I utterly repudiate the calumny that my humanism is socially subversive and anarchical. I must therefore hasten to explain that as an individualist I am neither insane nor inconsistent. Individualism, as I conceive it, does not involve a denial of society, though it does imply doubts, generated by reflection and experience, as to the practical value of many forms of collective action : it merely believes that individual initiative is socially indispensable and that certain functions are far better left to it. Now it is quite consistent with this to believe that there ought to be a social ideal, if it is added that individuals are the people who ought to believe in it and are the right instruments for realizing it. The answer, therefore, to the objection that there would be no place for individual initiative in the Eugenical State is simply that the social ideal can and should work through and on individuals, and that a reasonably organized society would leave far more to them than does the existing order, and would utilize individuals

of exceptional ability far sooner and far better. For as things go, society hears of the exceptional man about the time when he is getting too old to render the social services he could have rendered thirty years before. The world knows nothing of its greatest men, because by the time it knows something about them they have ceased to be the greatest. The Eugenical State, we may reasonably hope, would alter all that. It would contemplate the selection of the fit, not as the premature promotion of youngsters who can wait, but as something vitally concerning its own welfare. And it would possess a definite ideal and standard of value, whereby it would discriminate far better than at present between the valuable and the noxious departures from the current types. As things are, a large proportion of 'social reforms' are fraudulent or illusory or retrograde, and as nobody has any clear idea as to where we either are going or ought to go, the social valuation of innovations usually goes wrong, at least at first. Hence the best thing we can do is to let the tares grow up with the wheat, lest we destroy them both together. But the greater our ability to discriminate between them, the freer would be the field left open to the wheat.

VIII

(2) A more serious objection, however, develops out of the last. The effectiveness of a social ideal, as of all combined action, presupposes agreement between the members of the society as to what is good and bad, worthy of being fostered or exterminated. At present, however, in all existing societies such agreement is remarkable for its absence. Consequently no society could agree to pursue any consistent policy of self-selection.

It must be admitted that this difficulty might well be fatal, if it were a question of realizing perfection by a *coup de théâtre* or of establishing the Eugenical State by a *coup d'état.* But this idea is rendered sufficiently chimerical by the fact that our leading politicians are sure to be the last persons to be converted to the necessity for a eugenical policy. And if our ambition is limited to accelerating a little the upward crawl of evolution, a twofold reply will present itself. In the first place, there is already a considerable measure of agreement among men as to what is good and evil. The primary conditions of physical and social welfare are established beyond dispute, and legislation could give effect to this agreement to a far greater extent than it does. What is really in question therefore is as to how the existing

sphere of agreement should be enlarged. And here it would be well to disclaim once more any rigorously coercive policy, not on doctrinaire grounds, but simply because experience shows it to be ineffective. Much more may be expected from an era of reflection upon social problems and of conscious effort to agree upon the best course practicable. At present our disagreements seem hopeless, because we have not consciously grasped the principle that Selection must control Habit, and hence acquiesce fatalistically in the discrepancies which Nature and habit have produced. But if we realize that man's final duty is to re-make himself, we shall have a common aim—even though we shall no doubt long continue to differ as to the means of best achieving it. But such differences will be an advantage rather than a drawback, if they excite greater zeal and ingenuity in well-considered social experimentation. For we must attribute to the Eugenical State a greater measure both of toleration towards a variety of experiments and of docility in accepting their results, than is compatible with the unscientific methods of our present polity. And finally, it should be noted that as the agreement needed will only be practical, and as an infinity of reasons may always be given for doing the same thing, much theoretic difference of opinion may continue to subsist without doing any harm. In short, by

stimulating reflection upon the desirability and possibility of agreement, the Eugenical State may gradually attain as much of it as it requires, while the elasticity of its structure will always be ample to protect it against breaking strains in practice.

IX

(3) A third objection will be found to be pretentious rather than profound. It appeals to the economic Law of Supply and Demand in order to confute the belief that self-selection is possible, because social valuations mould social character and the conditions of social life. No, it will be objected, a nation cannot make a quality good by thinking it so, nor can its admiration make the worthless valuable. The social order ultimately rests upon the rigid order of Nature, and man has no power to alter either. If socially valuable qualities are also rare, society must pay a high price for them: they have a monopoly value which society must merely recognize. If a nation values amiable folly and frivolity above gravity and strenuous wisdom, it must go under.

There is of course a grain of truth at the bottom of such reasoning, but in its crude application to human society it is a gross exaggeration. Ultimately, perhaps, it is possible to formulate all the facts of social remuneration and the whole interplay of social relations

in merely economic terms. But it does not follow that this gives the deepest insight into their nature. And we should not allow ourselves to forget that they are *primarily* dependent on social choices and appreciations, and vary accordingly, and that this is the more directly human way of regarding them. For mankind in general, and the more advanced nations in particular, have secured so immense a preponderance over the dangers that beset their existence that they have up to a point emancipated themselves from the struggle for existence and the pressure of economic needs. Their position is so secure that they can play the fool and indulge their whims with practical impunity. The wealthy classes everywhere mostly do. We are so strong and so rich that we can afford to live in an age of unparalleled waste. Civilized man is everywhere squandering the natural resources of the earth, burning up the coal, using up the metals, cutting down the forests, killing off the fauna, poisoning the air. He is so rich and so strong that he hardly even thinks of insuring his posterity by paying a pittance to the men of science who are labouring to find for him fresh resources in lieu of those which his prodigality is rapidly exhausting. For he has obtained such control over Nature that it has become largely plastic to his will, and instead of submitting to natural conditions he adjusts them to his needs. And

so the social order is become plastic too. The Fates, the ineluctable necessities of organic nature, are driven off the stage of modern life, and constrained to lurk behind the scenes.

So it is the demand which creates the supply and not the impossibility of increasing the supply of anything desired which determines the intensity of the demand. If society desires to have a thing, it can make it desirable; if it desires something else, it is free to change its values. It has merely to affix a high rate of pay or honour to the service it requires, and those able to render it will divert their energies in this direction. Thus the demand varies with the desires, that is, with the fashions and opinions of men, and new values are constantly being created and old ones disestablished. It is the demand for more rapid locomotion than human limbs could compass which has produced the steamer, the railway, the motor, and the aeroplane, which has thrown the cabby and the coachman out of employment and exalted the emoluments and cheek of the chauffeur. And be it observed that each of these changes means not only a new form of machine but also a new type of man. It is a change in taste which has substituted Wagnerian for Italian opera, horse-racing for gladiatorial shows, and zoological gardens for the sanguinary exhibitions of the arena.

To descend still further into the concrete in

order to test the economic view, is it not nonsense to say that the Archbishop of Canterbury is paid £15,000 a year and Prof. J. J. Thomson seven or eight hundred, because the persons fitted to perform the latter's functions are twenty times as common as those suited to the former's ? Is not the real reason plainly that the former is the beneficiary of a long social development which has liberally endowed the Church, while the social appreciation of the value of science is only just beginning, and has not yet raised the makers of new truths to a par with the custodians of time-honoured revelations ? Our example, however, draws attention to a very general fact, viz. that the social position of various functions is very largely the product of past valuations which have persisted from mere habit. Hence their present salaries do not really prove that an Archbishop is twenty times as valuable to a nation as a scientific genius, or thrice as precious as a Premier, nor even that men now think so. How many of us, for example, really now believe that mere descent from an illiterate mediæval baron attests sufficient merit to entitle a man to a hereditary seat in the House of Lords ? If we continued to value fighting qualities as highly as of yore, we should promote our actual fighting men. When we want really to defend the House of Lords, we point to its sagacity in gauging the will of the people and to the

economic value of its attractiveness for foreign heiresses.

Hence one of the chief needs of a society which desires to reconstitute itself on eugenical principles is a thorough revision of social status. It must bring the social position of various services into closer agreement with their present value. And it must induce a greater feeling of responsibility about the popular valuations and transvaluations of functions, which are constantly exalting the position of the caterers to individual pleasures above the consolidators of man's permanent welfare. It is *not* good for a society that a cricketer or a prize-fighter, a film actor or a dancer, should be esteemed and rewarded more highly than the man who discovers a cure for malaria or cancer.

X

(4) Still we must not flatter ourselves that our humanist reply will convince the naturalistic *doctrinaire*. He will rather harden his heart and stiffen his doctrine, and bring up his heavy guns. He will appeal to Natural Selection. Man lives, and must continue to live, he will sagely point out, under this inexorable law. It is useless to contend against it, and to strive to improve our condition by our own initiative. The improvements aimed at are either consonant with the tendencies of Natural Selection or contrary to them. In the one case they

will come about of themselves; in the other they cannot come about at all.

Natural Selection at present is probably the greatest bogy in the whole field of social science. In the half-century of its existence it has changed from the most rabidly revolutionary to the most stupidly conservative of principles. For the reason, mainly, that both its universality and its connection with Intelligent Selection have been ignored. It is, assuredly, a universal principle from which no form of organic life escapes. But for this very reason there are a thousand forms of it; hence as a whole it is indeterminate and admits of alternatives. It does not answer the question *how* we shall live under it. It leaves us free, therefore, to render the Selection to which we submit intelligent and purposive.

In point of fact the form of Natural Selection its naturalistic interpreters usually have in mind is on the lowest plane, the plane of Habit. They mean by it the practice of the lower animals, whose power to control their conditions of life is very slight and who can adapt themselves only by modifying their bodily structures. But it is mere folly to set up their practice as a model for man to imitate, and sheer stupidity not to see how differently he is situated.[1] With

[1] This difference has been brought out most clearly and forcibly by Dr. Rudolf Goldscheid, in his essay on *Darwin als Lebenselement unserer modernen Kultur*, 1909, pp. 62 foll.; cf. also his *Entwicklungswerttheorie*, 1908.

man's present resources it is usually easier to change the environment than to change human nature. In society it is more economical to promote the fit than to extirpate the unfit. It is cheaper to support a social burden than to provoke a social convulsion. And every end may be attained by a dozen means, between which the bare Law of Natural Selection does not decide. It is open therefore to a statesman to choose among alternatives. He may believe that his nation will survive better by throwing its energies into war or industry, into agriculture or manufacturing, by building up a strong army or a strong navy, by organizing itself individualistically or socialistically. And these may be real alternatives; for actually nations have prospered in all these ways, and so far as any one can foresee there are real turning-points in history at which alternative developments are possible. Such choices are no more infractions of the principle of the causal coherence of events than is the occurrence of incalculable variations. For once they are decided, the course of events flows calculably on, until the next crisis. Hence Natural Selection is in practice a very elastic principle, which may take the form of Intelligent Selection and work through human choices. No appeal to it in the abstract therefore need impede the course of social amelioration.

XI

(5) Still, even admitting all this, a serious danger would seem to remain. Suppose a nation agrees to adopt an ideal of Good and to organize itself for its attainment, how is it to make sure that its ideal is the right one? Suppose it turns out that it has adopted a *false* ideal, *i.e.* one that cannot be realized and that works worse and worse the more it is persisted in! Will not the very concentration of national purpose and unification of national endeavours enormously enhance the dangers of failure and render the final overthrow more irretrievable? Nay, is not this most likely to occur? Do not nations err like individuals, only on a larger scale? Have they not frequently been saved only by the fact that they did not all go wrong together?

This objection sounds very formidable, but the difficulty is hardly more than dialectical. There is no reason in the first place why it should be more fatal to intelligent and purposive action than to beings subject to the lowest forms of Natural Selection. Nay, these latter are even less likely to be infallible. We may even, if we like, play with the idea that evolution has committed irreparable errors or been a mistake altogether. It might be contended, for example, that man's intellectual

growth has been permanently stunted by his failure to develop six fingers and a duodecimal notation to match them, and that the whole mammalian stock erred in retaining only two pairs of limbs instead of acquiring the ampler endowments of insects and Indian gods, and that both sleeping and dying were foolish habits for living beings to fall into.

But after all hardly any one really believes that the course of evolution has gone irremediably astray from the start. The possibilities of error loom large only while they are taken in abstraction from the methods of correcting errors. And with the growth of intelligence the resources both for avoiding and for correcting errors are surely increasing. It is not at all probable that civilized men conduct the affairs of their life worse than savages, savages than animals, vertebrates than invertebrates, multicellulars than unicellulars. Of course, societies, like individuals, make mistakes, and should expect to make them. But not all mistakes are fatal, nor do they all preclude the subsequent attainment of truth. Indeed it is usually by our errors that we learn. It is not true that if we start wrong, we are bound to plunge deeper and deeper into error. It is also possible that we may gradually come to rectify our initial blunders and rise to more and more adequate truths. This, indeed, is the inspiring faith upon which the whole pro-

cedure of science rests. It is, moreover, what we believe to have happened in the case of the individuals and the societies which have survived. They did not start with an assured knowledge of the absolutely right course. It was impossible that they should; and it was also unnecessary. They experimented and discriminated good from bad by their consequences and groped their way up step by step.

Despite the asseverations of metaphysicians, it is not true that a knowledge of absolute truth and absolute good is necessary to progress. We do not need to know what is absolutely good in order to know that one thing is better than another. We do not need to know the elixir of life in order to know that beef is more nourishing than straw, and water healthier than absinthe. We do not need to be assured of immortality in order to judge that a life is worth living. We do not need to know absolute truth in order to detect a lie. The fact is that our ideals are not actually prior to the particular experiences they profess to 'explain', but are built up out of suggestions derived from the latter.

XII

Hence the Eugenical State, being aware of its liability to err, will guard against error in advance, by incorporating into its structure provisions for detecting and correcting the

errors it may commit. It will value individuality highly enough to grant its members freedom of discussion and experiment upon all questions which are felt to be not yet settled, and it will be observant enough of the experiments of other nations to profit by their experiences. For it need not be supposed either that international rivalries will cease (indeed they may even be aggravated by foolish race theories), or that the same policies will be adopted in all the societies converted to eugenics. Only so soon as a eugenical expedient was found to work well anywhere it would have to be adopted everywhere, just as at present any improvement in the engines of destruction devised by any nation is speedily copied all the world over.

The one serious danger, to which not only Eugenical Selection but Civilization in general would seem to be exposed, would be the universal and simultaneous adoption by mankind of a scheme to arrest progress and to arrest itself at something like its present level, by artificially eliminating all its progressive stocks. This idea cannot be pronounced impossible *a priori*; for we have in the social insects examples of highly organized communities which are non-progressive, and the ideals of current socialism seem logically, and sometimes intentionally, to aim at such a levelling of abilities and eradication of individuality. But the obstacles to the success

of such a scheme are far greater than those in the way of any eugenical policy ; and after all even of Socialism a nobler and more eugenical form is conceivable, and indeed more likely to be practicable. Hence we may, I think, conclude with considerable confidence that National Self-Selection is not impossible because it is actual, and that it is capable and deserving of being turned into a great instrument for good.

III

EUGENICS *VERSUS* CIVILIZATION [1]

Civilization just now has more than one string to its bow. It is bow-stringing itself with several. Of these the most expeditiously effective in strangling it is doubtless modern war, though modern revolution runs it close, and its ravages are more irreparable. For, as we see it operating to-day in Russia and elsewhere, it simply wipes out the classes which produced the intelligences that controlled the intricate web of mechanisms called Civilization; and their destruction is irreparable at a time when it was becoming doubtful anyhow whether these mechanisms were not growing too intricate to be controlled by intelligence at all. And there is also a third factor, which operates much more slowly, but unceasingly and with cumulative effects; so that it must in the end prove absolutely fatal, not only to Civilization, but perhaps even to the continuance of the human race. It is a disease permeating the

[1] First published in *The Eugenics Review*, July 1921.

whole organization and ordering of our civilization and continually poisoning the whole social organism; to such an extent diffused in it that it may be debated whether it is an inherent disease of Civilization or whether Civilization is not itself the disease. For this reason it has long eluded diagnosis, and Eugenics, in attacking it, seems to be challenging Civilization. Yet we can look to scientific eugenics alone to understand this malady, and to suggest (perhaps) the means for arresting its progress.

In this respect it differs from the other dangers that beset the future of mankind. The danger of Revolution is acutely realized by the upper classes all the world over; and if their efforts to bottle up this evil spirit are not always signalized by superior sagacity and sanctioned with the Seal of Solomon, they are at least sufficiently resolute and ruthless. The danger from War has sufficiently impressed itself even on the dullest minds; for the princes of the powers of the air have made it sufficiently plain that in future they will spare neither age, nor innocence, nor sex. The more thoughtful are accordingly excogitating devices to diminish war, and if these fail, it will not be for lack of trying or for lack of foresight. But as yet neither the rich nor the wise have had their attention properly directed to the still profounder sources of social failure which it is the mission of Eugenics to reveal. Hence

this essay. Hence also its somewhat catchy title, which must not, however, be taken to assume that Civilization and Eugenics are naturally and necessarily hostile, except in so far as *our* civilization, unable to control the social influences it has generated, has identified itself with its vices, and so has fallen short of being truly civilized. At any rate our present aim is merely to examine the relations between Eugenics and Civilization, to point out certain flaws in the functioning of the latter, and to suggest how, in its own interest, as much as in mankind's, it may be amended.

I

For this purpose it may be well to consider to begin with the meaning of both these terms, and to propound at least a provisional definition of each.

Let us try 'Eugenics' first, as being the more scientific, and therefore more definite, term. As a science, Eugenics is the study of the conditions of improving the human race; as an art, it is the putting into practice of the results of this study.

It should be noted that this definition rules out at once the caricatures of Eugenics that are still so popular. Neither as a science nor as an art is Eugenics committed to a 'low' view of human nature. It is not a form of

' materialism '. It is not blind to whatever is not physical. It is not pledged to treat man as merely animal. It is not a crude and silly attempt to intrude the methods of the stock-breeder into realms where they must ludicrously fail. Its past reveals that it was first conceived by the most idealistic and ascetic of philosophers, Plato, and its future points to a higher and nobler scheme of morals than is now in operation anywhere.

Nevertheless our definition has a serious flaw. It is fairly obvious that at a vital point it contains an indeterminate term.

To ' improve ' is to make *better*, and ' better ' implies a standard of *good*. What this ' good ' is it does not tell us. Now this seems to be a serious omission. For unless we have a standard of good we can use, how can we tell whether a change we are observing or effecting is for better or for worse ? And even if we have such a standard in mind and can use it to measure with, there is a further question whether our standard is a good one, or the best, and so whether our measurements are right. We need not, however, as yet discuss these difficulties ; it will be enough if they are borne in mind.

II

' Civilization ' is a much vaguer and trickier term ; but like ' progress ' it may be shown to

have lurking in it this same notion of a standard of good. It is used to designate a state of mankind which is superior to, and exclusive of, 'barbarism' and 'savagery'. But 'civilization' admits of degrees, and it is far from clear by what criteria it should be decided whether a community is civilized, and whether the civilization of one community is 'higher' than that of another. It is clear, however, that 'Civilization' is an achievement of man, or rather of some men, and is not a congenital quality, like, say, sex. In other words the baby of civilized parents is not born civilized, but has to acquire civilization. He is born just as ignorant of it as the little savage. It has to be impressed on him by the education and social training to which he is subjected, and if he likes it, it is an acquired taste. If he grew up in a different society he would become as big a barbarian or as sordid a savage as any native to the manner born, and Mr. Rice Burroughs's *Tarzanades*, to prove that British peers are better educated by gorillas in an African jungle than by athletes at Eton, are not science but fiction. At any rate it is important to recognize that the transmission of Civilization is effected, in very complex ways, by education, in a social order: this fact has the important consequence that if the mechanism of this transmission is destroyed or seriously damaged, Civilization may dis-

appear in one generation—as we shall probably observe in Russia. Its life habitually hangs by one thread.

Historically also Civilization seems to be unique. It has been developed only once. All the existing civilizations are probably traceable to a single source, and to what, in view of the vast masses of savages who have continued to inhabit the earth for untold ages, must be regarded as an historical accident of relatively recent date. The earliest known civilization grew up some 8–10,000 years ago around the Persian Gulf,[1] and spread thence into Central Asia, China, Egypt, and the Mediterranean. It appears to have been rendered materially possible by a discovery, the domestication of the wheat plant, which gave 'Cain' the victory over 'Abel', and provided for the settled grain-eating tiller of the soil a better livelihood than was secured to the meat-eating nomad.[2] It also rendered possible the city-state or πόλις, which was at first the small (but impregnable) fort in which the cultivators took refuge when raided by the nomads.

[1] The archæological evidence still leaves it open to debate whether civilization in Babylonia and Elam was anterior to that in Egypt, but the geographical reasons are very strong.

[2] My friend, Prof. S. Langdon, tells me that actually the first food plants to be cultivated were the date-palm and millet; but this does not affect the point of the argument.

III

Now we have learnt from Aristotle that though the πόλις arose from natural necessity, τοῦ ζῆν ἕνεκα, to render life possible at all, its justification and essential meaning lie in the reference it contains to the 'good' life. The city-state, and *a fortiori* the larger and more complex civilizations that grow out of it, minister, by definition, to the good life, or should do so. So political philosophers have devoutly believed, or at least declared, after Plato and Aristotle, for the past 2300 years.

If, however, a man is at all of a reflective and critical disposition, he will not accept this as the alpha and omega of political wisdom. It should prompt him to inquire further and to raise two big questions. The first is a question of fact, viz., *Does it?* Does the State, does Civilization, does the actual social order in point of fact enable men to live well, to live better than they otherwise could, to live best, with the organization actually in being? These are all big questions which cannot be answered offhand. For in answering we have to begin with discounting the *bias* with which we are naturally equipped or afflicted, as a result of our education in a particular society. We should not forget that we have been moulded by enormous social pressure and imbued with

the beliefs that Civilization is infinitely preferable to savagery and that *our* civilization is far superior to any other. It demands therefore a great and sustained effort of thought to question an habitual belief that has become a second nature, and few are capable of it, unless they are actually being stimulated by a painful consciousness that *they* are not in fact living as well as they desire : in that case they expose themselves, of course, to the retort that their personal distress is giving them a contrary bias, hostile to the claims of Civilization. Again, it is hardly possible to decide whether Civilization enables men to live better than they otherwise would without surveying the alternatives to it that are practicable, or may become so, and such consideration might take one far afield in the realm of political speculation. Lastly, it seems probable that no one, except a few favourites of fortune and old men who have become psychologically conservative, would be willing to contend that our actual civilization is literally and in every respect the best that can be conceived. The ordinary conservatism of most of us rests upon *fear*, the fear that the social order might very easily be changed for the worse.

IV

One result, however, stands out, that at every step in such inquiries we are running up

against the problem *What is the Good?* What is it that sets the standard by which we estimate and measure the advantages and defects, or in other words the *value*, of the various social orders, actual or ideal? Without a knowledge of this good it is plain that we cannot intelligently discuss the claims of the State, the value of Civilization, and the possibilities of betterment. It is equally plain that all social co-operation demands as a preliminary a certain measure of practical agreement about what is 'good' and worth doing, and 'bad' and so desirable to avoid. Wherever, therefore, social co-operation exists as a fact, it involves a certain practical agreement about the 'good', which need not extend to ethical theory, because very various theoretical reasons may be given for doing what is practically the same thing. Moreover, this fact of co-operation is not only practically valuable, it is also a great help in attacking problems that would otherwise be theoretically insoluble. Theoretically and in the abstract there is no solution of a really fundamental disagreement about values: for example, if A, applying a pessimist standard, condemns as 'bad' the life which B, an optimist, approves as 'good', and if both are consistent in drawing out the consequences of their principles, they must arrive at scales of value that will have little or nothing in common. But as actually men are not consistent pessi-

mists or optimists, they contrive to agree very fairly well about what is desirable and not. And if, in addition, they are fairly intelligent and reasonable, they may extend their initial agreement by talking over the social situation from their several points of view, and making allowances for each other.

But why, it may be asked, harp on this string of elementary platitudes? Because it cannot be made too plain that eugenics and civilization are actually in the same boat, and that the theoretic difficulties of the former are identical with those of the latter. Both are rooted in the notion of the good, but neither of them knows with absolute certainty what the good is, and both are vitally affected by the doubts and disputes that beset the good. If, now, we cannot tell what the good is, we can neither know how to better the human race, nor decide whether Civilization is or is not a good thing. And in either case, if we disagree about the good, we shall get divergent aims, quarrel about it, and probably shall have to fight it out; with the result, very likely, that both sides will miss the goods they aimed at.

V

Fortunately, however, it would seem that we may evade, or at least postpone, the vexed question as to what is the real good to which

both Eugenics and Civilization appeal. Differences of opinion on this subject are not in the first instance relevant to the discussion whether Civilization is conducive to Eugenics. For a little reflection will show that, just because Eugenics and Civilization are in the same boat, whatever conception of good is involved in the one will be involved also in the other; so that the two views, whether ultimately right or wrong, will always be comparable.

To illustrate this implication more concretely, let us suppose that a certain social order has adopted a certain scale of values, and organized itself accordingly. It thinks, or acts as if it thought (for societies often act without thinking), let us say, that the military life is the best; it admires the military man above all others; it regards courage as the highest virtue. It will consequently and consistently, therefore, put a soldier on the apex of the social pyramid, and make the possession of military qualities a condition of social approbation, promotion, and remuneration. It will, moreover, educate its members to accept and enact this conception of the good life. Its prevalent social belief, moreover, will affect and determine the beliefs of its eugenists and their conceptions of what is ' progress ' and human betterment and the ideal for human society to aim at. The ' heaven ' of such a society would

presumably resemble the Valhalla of the Norsemen, and consist of an eternal fight, just for the exercise and the fun of it! Other societies similarly might organize themselves so as to express their admiration of the scholar, like China, of the sage, like India, of the business man, like America; and if they came into conflict with each other, as they probably would, there would be involved a question of the survival of conflicting *ideals* as well as of States and individuals.

VI

The external international struggles between ideals should not, however, engross our attention; there is also quite as important a problem as to how a society must organize itself *internally* so as to give effect to the faith that is in it and to ensure the triumph of the ideal it has adopted. For it does not follow as a matter of course that, because a society theoretically prefers a certain type of man, it also favours him in practice, and succeeds in producing him. It may actually be so stupidly and badly organized as simultaneously both to admire and to destroy him. Thus love commonly 'spoils', and the ruin of the beautiful is very commonly the effect of the social admiration of beauty; how this may come about can easily be understood if we revert to the militarist ideal of excellence and consider its social operation.

The militarist ideal of the good life is of course the oldest of all, and also the most persistent: it is very widespread and most aggressive, very popular and theoretically very obvious to this day. It ought surely to have become universal long ago. Yet somehow it has *not* succeeded in extirpating all other ideals or in moulding all mankind according to its model. There are still vast populations which cravenly prefer to live ingloriously in peace and would think Valhalla Hell. The glorious days of Chivalry, when every gallant gentleman loved fighting for its own sake and roamed about the world to pick quarrels with all and sundry on a point of honour or a question of the supreme beauty of his lady (whom the other fellow had not seen) in a pure spirit of knight-errantry, are dead and done with. The religion of the Valhallians has become obsolete, and in its stead most 'civilized' communities profess (though they do not practise) a highly paradoxical religion which is essentially pacifist and after 2000 years of mundane wear and tear has shown itself to be still as capable as ever of generating conscientious objectors to the whole militarist ideal.

It is not easy, at first sight, to account for this. But we should reflect that it is not enough for a society to *will* a good for it to come about. It must also so organize itself as to bring it into being. Hence it will be vain for it to preach

and inculcate militarism and to lavish upon its representatives the highest rewards and positions in its gift, if it does not succeed in securing an adequate supply of militarists whom it can honour and obey. Now this last is apparently the essential point which militarism has overlooked, with the result that it always tends, not to propagate, but to eliminate, itself. All through history those who have lived by the sword have perished by the sword. All through history the fighting races have fought themselves out. All through history the meek have inherited the earth, which they were willing to cultivate for proud lords whose violence and vices were presently to lead to their extinction. All through history there has been going on in every community an *internal* selection, which, though far beneath the notice of historians, has shown itself capable of profoundly changing the character, the ideas, and the type of a people.

This is doubtless why the Scandinavians, a thousand years ago the fiercest of warriors, are now about the most peaceable of Europeans. This is why in a country like Egypt, whose political history has been a spectacular series of conquests by all sorts and conditions of men, black, white, yellow, and brown, there has been so little biological change that the bulk of the population is still physically indistinguishable from the pre-dynastic Egyptian of 6000 years ago. This is why aristocracies die out

and men of ancient lineage and noble birth are rarities in every land. This is why sheep are more plentiful in nature than wolves, and rabbits than tigers. A society clearly must not organize itself so as to eliminate *de facto* the qualities it honours, but must see to it that its admiration is not fatal to them.

Yet it is apparently upon such a self-contradictory and self-defeating policy that all civilized societies are embarked. The case of militarism does not stand alone. It is not exceptional, but universal. And there is a very simple reason for this in every existing society. It is a well-known statistical fact that every civilized society is at present cursed with a differential birth-rate of the wrong kind. That is to say, the birth-rate is everywhere much lower in the higher than in the lower strata of the social scale, and even in England, which is not by any means the worst off of civilized communities, it is only one-half of that necessary to maintain the numbers in the upper classes. As this difference is nothing like compensated for by the lower death-rate in the upper strata, the effect is that every civilized society is engaged in extirpating its upper classes and in recruiting itself from its lower, nay, literally from its ' proletariat '.

VII

From this situation there results the paradox that every society is busily substituting worse racial qualities for better, and extirpating the very qualities it values most. The proof runs as follows. In every society some qualities —it matters not what, for the moment—are valued and supposed to be admirable and good, and are selected and rewarded accordingly. Hence the lucky possessors of these qualities are highly remunerated and enabled to rise in the social scale. Social promotion is thus the reward of whatever merits a society chooses to recognize. What degree of merit is recognized and how highly it is rewarded, varies somewhat in different communities, but in a general way it may be said that the barriers of class-distinctions have everywhere been broken down and that ability—of the sort, of course, that each society values—has no longer any serious difficulty in rising. But its reward is also its capital punishment. For as it rises it passes from a social region in which the birth-rate is relatively high and the prospects of parentage are comparatively good to others where the birth-rate gets lower and lower. The higher it gets, therefore, the more it tends to be sterilized. Thus the particular kind of ability a society recognizes, the cream the society wants,

is always rising to the top; but when it gets there it is always being skimmed off, and cast away. Could anything be more fatuously suicidal than such an organization of society? Could there be a more crushing confutation of the pretensions of the civilized State to benefit the human race? Is it not clear that while it operates as it is doing, it must conduce to the *deterioration* of the human stock, because it is continually pumping up from the lower strata the particular sorts of ability that are valued, concentrating them in the upper strata, and there destroying 50 per cent of them in every generation?

Consequently the organization of all existing societies must at present be pronounced to be appallingly *dysgenic*. They are all engaged in destroying, radically and racially, whatever '*eu*' they themselves have recognized. This would seem to render it rather a blessing that eugenists are not yet able to pronounce any cut and dried scheme for the betterment of the human race. It may be more or less true, as is so often alleged, that they cannot 'breed for points', because they do not know what points to breed for. But if they had known, and tried to start a 'better' breed, they would at once have encountered a formidable institution, which is perpetually engaged in breeding out of the human stock *all* the points that are socially recognized as '*good*'. Civilization is

even more ignorant than eugenics of the nature and marks of the truly good ; so, to make sure that it shall not escape, it so organizes itself as to extirpate even the apparent good. In other words Civilization has become an instrument, not of the progressive improvement of the human race, but of its deterioration, and if there still is progress, it is *not* in the inherent qualities of man, but in the mechanisms by which he controls the world and in the knowledge by which he works them. This in brief is the very serious charge which Eugenics brings against our Civilization.

It is, clearly, quite independent of the disputes as to what is the real good, and whether the good actually aimed at by societies and eugenists is the right one. Whatever view is taken of the Good, Civilization stands self-condemned as destroying the good it is endeavouring to promote and the valuable qualities it is trying to augment, and so it is the duty of the eugenist, whatever his own ideal of human excellence, to accuse Civilization of insidious treason against the human kind.

VIII

It does not follow, however, that because Civilization is now playing us false, either that it has always done so, or that it must always continue to do so. The two cases demand separate consideration.

(1) As regards the past of Civilization, examination shows that its evil influence on racial fitness is no new thing, though the harm it did was probably not so extensive formerly as it is now. Still all through history aristocracies have decayed and died out. In ancient times the Roman patricians and the Spartiates are conspicuous examples. The Venetian oligarchy, though it maintained its grip politically for over 1000 years, became utterly effete. In England the Norman nobility destroyed itself in the Wars of the Roses, in France the *Ancienne Noblesse* has been fading away rapidly since the Revolution deprived it of its lands and privileges. The late war will probably be found to have dealt a death-blow to the nobility in the whole of Europe east of the Rhine. In short it seems to be by a sort of biological necessity that aristocracies are always dying out, even where their numbers are recruited from among the *nouveaux riches*. The increase in the numbers of the House of Lords is not a biological but a political phenomenon, and connected with the methods used by politicians in replenishing their party chests. In short, as the Romans recognized, the ' fatherhood ' of the ' patricians ' was always largely honorary, and the State had to look to the ' proletarians ' to maintain its numbers. On the other hand it must be remembered that the more rigid structure of ancient societies was a biological

advantage; it conserved and multiplied what ability existed in the lower classes, by preventing it from rising to its own destruction. Throughout the Middle Ages the Church alone offered a *carrière ouverte aux talents*, when the talents happened to have been born in a humble station; but as its price was celibacy, it can hardly escape the censure of the modern eugenist.

(2) The conclusion that Civilization is detrimental to human excellence and that its claim to have bettered human life is not well founded, is curiously borne out by the zoological fact that the bodily development of man has long ago come to a standstill. Palæontology steadfastly refuses to countenance the belief that there has been any physical improvement in the human type since the beginning of history. Modern man is not bigger, stronger, or more beautiful than his ancestors were 10,000 years ago. Nor is there reason to think that he is intrinsically more intelligent. He has at any rate no bigger brain. When the Americans during the war applied to their young conscripts the mental tests of scientific psychology, they discovered to their surprise and disgust that their ' mental age ' was not sixteen as they had supposed, but only thirteen; thus the average American had to be classified as a ' high-grade moron ', which is scientific jargon for ' feeble-minded '. These tests have not

been systematically applied as yet to the old, nor to the psychologists themselves, but I have little doubt that, if they were, the results would be equally devastating. If we go back to prehistoric eras we find that in remote palæolithic times the Cro-Magnon race, which inhabited Europe in the Aurignacian period, seems to have been definitely superior to any modern race in size, strength, and cranial capacity. Even the still earlier Mousterian man, *Homo Neandertalensis*, though he had a very receding forehead, presumably because he needed to develop other brain-centres than those we most commonly use, had distinctly *more* brains than the average man has now. The Boskop skull, found in the Transvaal, and ascribed to an ancestral Bushman, had 1832 c.c. of brains, 350 more than the average English braincase holds at present.[1] Our brain-development has apparently been retrogressive for a long time, and it is a mere hypothesis, a flattering assumption, that we use smaller but more compact and convoluted brains more efficiently. The only real advance that science will allow the human body to have (probably) achieved in the last 10,000 years is in its powers of resistance to microbic diseases; it hastens to add that from this point of view the two most superior races on the earth are the Chinaman and the Jew—simply because they have for

[1] Cf. *Nature*, No. 2671.

many centuries had to adapt themselves to living under the most appalling slum conditions, and only the toughest have survived !

In spite of this well-attested arrest of man's physical development, it must be regarded as highly probable that the human body once *was* physically progressive. There must have been a time when the conditions of life must have conduced to the *improvement* of the human race, and when social influences did not conspire to thwart them. For there must have been a time when man grew the massive brain that mediates the exercise of his intelligence, and is plainly the organ in which he indisputably surpasses his anthropoid cousins. Assuredly man has sometime had occasion to develop his brains. Only this time must have antedated what we now call civilization. It must have extended over long ages of what we now call barbarism and savagery ; nor is it altogether impossible to understand how these may have conduced to man's eugenical improvement in a way our present Civilization refuses to do.

It is clear in the first place that uncivilized man has much less control over Nature, and is much more at the mercy of natural conditions, and that his fellow-men can consequently do much less for a defective, maimed, or inefficient member of their community. Hence the phenomenon of social ' contra-selection ', whereby under social conditions those are preserved who

would otherwise be ' unfit ', and are preserved at the cost, and to the detriment, of the fit, cannot occur. Personal efficiency and intelligence are much more essential to survival in a savage or barbarous society than in one which is full of institutions like hereditary rank and wealth, charity, philanthropy, and 'democracy', which, whether designedly or not, have the effect of sheltering, fostering, preserving, and propagating vast masses of unfitness, inefficiency, and inferiority. A society which has the power over Nature that we have can corrupt its way upon the earth to an indefinite extent; but one that is subject to severe natural selection cannot afford to breed inefficiency, either individually or socially. Of course, however, in respect to the qualities which are criteria of selection at the time and place in question.

IX

It is a mistake, however, to think that intelligence is not among them, and has not been of vital importance in savage life. For in truth the savage simply cannot afford to be a fool, or to breed fools: the fool-killing agencies in his life are much too potent. Accordingly he is not a fool; in the ordinary affairs of his life he is far more capable of acting intelligently and of fending for himself than the bulk of those who deride his ' stupidity '.

His apparent stupidity arises, not from lack of native endowment, but from lack of knowledge and of the apparatus handed down by the social traditions of ages of Civilization: nor is he more helpless in the City of London than a bank-clerk would be on a desert island or a professor in a primeval jungle. Hence it is perfectly conceivable that human intelligence was in fact developed under the severest natural selection, by anthropoids who could only make a living by the most strenuous exercise of their faculties under rapidly changing conditions. Probably our ancestors became men because they had to, when they found themselves cut off in a deteriorating climate with diminishing supplies of vegetable food. So, as Prof. Carveth Read has ingeniously suggested,[1] they became carnivores, and banded themselves together to hunt big game in packs of 'wolf-apes', incidentally acquiring in the process the moral qualities and social solidarity of ζῷα πολιτικά which Aristotle so much admired, and so unjustly scored to the credit of the πόλις. This then was probably how and why the big human brain was grown; or possibly the reason why the early races of man seem to have had such surprisingly large brains is not that they were all intelligent, but simply that the fool and the idiot could not then grow up, to leave behind him an *adult* skull.

[1] *The Origin of Man*, ch. i., ii.

All this, of course, is conjectural reconstruction of what we should all recognize as the most important and formative period of human history, if only we knew more about it; but it is confirmed by what we can still observe among the higher 'barbarians'. At this stage of human development it is still a real biological advantage to be well born, as the son of a chief rather than of a commoner, and a real advantage to a chief, especially in old age, to be amply provided with sons and heirs. Perceiving this, the chiefs tend to monopolize the women, and even when they do not, life is so hard that their offspring survive better than those of the low born. There is, in other words, a differential death-rate in favour of the *upper* classes, which more than outweighs their inferior fertility, if it has begun to develop.

X

We meet with indications of this social condition in Homer and in Greek Mythology. Priam had fifty sons, but Thersites was not married; or if he was, had to leave his wife at home for the duration of the war, without any prospect of acquiring, like Agamemnon or Achilles, a captive damsel or two; hence his democratic discontent with the social order. The sons of Herakles on the other hand, descended, doubtless, from an exceptionally

vigorous sire, could form themselves into a conquering tribe that overran half the Greek world : whereas in a later age nothing became of the 354 children of Augustus of Saxony, whom Carlyle is so fond of praising as the physically strong—with the sole exception of Maurice de Saxe. And even he only became a Maréchal de France and founded no dynasty. Sir H. H. Johnston gives an interesting parallel from modern barbarism which shows that the eugenical career of Herakles is not quite a thing of the past. In his *Uganda Protectorate* (1902), vol. ii. p. 720, he tells us about the Busoga that "The race is being saved by a few notable chiefs who are marvellous getters of children. The great chief Luba is still a vigorous man of perhaps sixty, and has had more than 100 stalwart sons, each of whom have become the father of a numerous progeny. So that Luba, when he dies, will probably be the progenitor of 1000 children. Another old chief of Nilotic race is now past ninety, and is said to be the father of 1000 children, more or less. It has been in fact very much the custom in Busoga for the chiefs, who being at all times well-nourished, were well suited to be 'sires'—to impress all the young women of the district into their harims. . . . Among the peasants infant mortality is terrible. It is rare that a peasant woman succeeds in rearing more than one child. The influence of the two missionary

societies in Busoga is restraining the excessive polygamy of the chiefs and the better conditions of life among the common people together tend to equalizing the production of children." This is what 'civilization' at work means! Presumably the quality of the Busoga baby is now deteriorating rapidly. Similarly it transpired recently in Parliament that another one of these barbarian chieftains, King Kabba Rega of Unyoro, who had been deported some thirty years ago, as politically dangerous and a focus of unrest, could not, even at the age of ninety, safely be allowed to return to his native land. Incidentally it came out that when he departed from Unyoro he left behind him a tribe of 250 sturdy sons! History records also that Massinissa of Numidia, dying at the age of ninety, left infant children in his harim: so he too appears to have been a barbarian of similar physique and morale.

When we ponder on the biological significance of such facts, we shall find it less difficult to understand why among barbarians so many of the chiefs claim descent from 'gods', and get themselves deified. They are in fact descended from superior stock, and are physically and mentally superior to the common herd. They form a real aristocracy, and have to be personally superior to their subjects. For unless they are, they cannot keep their places.

It is clear then that under certain conditions

societies can be conceived, and can exist, which, unlike ours, are recruited preferentially from their upper classes and their superior members. However, this does not mean, of course, that because in this one respect the social organization of barbarism is superior to ours, we should revert to it. Nor does it mean that the methods by which a preferential survival of the fit is secured in barbarian life are models for us to copy. These methods are obviously barbarous, crude, and wasteful, like natural selection everywhere. *Our* problem is to devise schemes of *intelligent* selection, which will conserve the benefits of natural selection without their drawbacks, and without plunging into the follies of our civilized *contra*-selection. *How* to solve this problem is, of course, the difficulty. Being a social problem, it is necessarily complicated. It cannot be settled merely by biology. It involves human psychology at every step, and sooner or later will be plunged in the whirlpool of politics. But it is clear that a society which wishes to *improve must* so organize itself as to renew itself from its better rather than from its worse stocks.

It is clear, lastly, that *only* if it does, will it be organized rationally and deserve eugenical approval. On the other hand a society which does the opposite of this must be called irrational and foolish ; for it is simply committing suicide. The longer it continues to prefer the

feeble in mind and body, the lower it will sink; ultimately it must sink so low that no amount of tradition and inherited knowledge can keep alive the congenital idiots of which it will eventually be composed, if only because they will be fools enough to pervert the customs, and to fail to assimilate the knowledge, that sustained them. Of both these dangers an eye that is not blinded by the conceit of civilization may already discern the incipient symptoms: it is surely strange that the Great War did not lead to the rise of a great general or a great statesman anywhere. This must mean either that armies and politics are so organized that genius cannot rise to the top in them, or that there is no genius to rise. The latter seems more probable, while the reason why the symptoms of racial decay are not more pronounced is probably that European civilization is still living on its biological capital, on the qualities bred into the Nordic stock by the severest natural selection, while it was still barbarian, only 1500 years ago.

XI

But it is time that we approached the second question: Must Civilization continue to be in the future as it has been in the past, literally the *hostis humani generis*? May not the eugenist hope to enlighten and convert it, and

to guide the forces that control it into saner ways ?

Well, it may not be necessary to despair of Civilization. For after all there has now come into being a new fact : Civilization is no longer acting blindly. It is beginning to *know* what it is doing, whereas until now it was unconscious of its eugenical ineptitude, and did not ascribe the maladies from which it suffered to its own action. So it may perhaps be prevailed upon to stop doing evil, or at least to try to control itself. Nevertheless, the more one studies the ways and means of reversing the inveterate trend of civilization to deteriorate its victim, man, the more minutely one traces the ramifications of its corrupting influence, the more one realizes the psychological subtlety of the institutions which produce and support the present social order (or mal-arrangement) and mould modern man into conformity with their requirements, the more formidable seem the difficulties which eugenics will have to overcome, if it is to induce humanity to save itself.

For one perceives that the causes of the dysgenic working of civilized society are literally all-pervasive and that every institution, and nearly every idea, now current will have to be transformed and re-directed, if this working is to be reversed. One is almost tempted to exclaim that the only hope of human improvement lies in a clean sweep of civilization, made,

say, by Bolshevism, and followed, after long ages, by a fresh start from a healthy barbarism that has perforce purged itself of our physical and mental maladies! But one has no right to say this without first examining the difficulties of practical eugenics, which is far too extensive a topic for the present essay. Until our legislators show some willingness to listen to eugenical opinion we may fairly shirk them, and devote our conclusion to a question of method and a much-needed piece of theoretical analysis.

XII

At the outset the question of how it was possible to ascertain whether a 'good' aimed at as an ideal by a society or a scheme of eugenics, was really good, was deliberately put aside; not because it was insoluble, but because it was irrelevant to the proof of the perverse working of Civilization. True, the problem may not admit of cut and dried solution in advance and in the abstract any more than other social problems; but we may nevertheless be able to forecast the method by which the human race may work towards a solution and feel its way towards self-improvement. The problem of ascertaining the true good is not different in principle from that of ascertaining the real Truth; in both cases the real clue lies in making adequate provision

for the continuous correction of error and the substitution of better views for worse.

This involves, of course, a frank admission, that we do not start with any absolute or complete knowledge either of the true or of the good, though we have plenty of opinions about both, which are foolishly wont to lay claim to absolute validity. As they are also normally incompatible and usually incoherent, they breed nothing but quarrels and contentions, and conduce to social chaos. But these contentions are inherently unprofitable, because both sides are more or less wrong, and both positions need amendment. What we need to foster is the willingness to accept correction at the hands of experience and to abandon positions that are no longer tenable. For then, and only then, will the better cease to be an enemy of the good, and become a guide to it.

We may next discard the dialectical possibility that the human race may actually be improving when it supposes itself to be deteriorating, precisely because it has adopted a false standard of good which it is failing to attain. Abstractly this is just possible, but there are such multitudinous ways of going wrong that it is very improbable that one of them, viz. the failure to reach what is wrongly supposed to be good, will lead, by mere chance, towards the true good.

The procedure actually used by men in

developing their ideals, correcting errors in their valuations, and substituting better ones for worse, may be better illustrated by a homely analogy with the way of deciding whether a certain foodstuff, say a new fungus, is ' good to eat '. Of course we do not know this at first: it may be poisonous, and not edible at all. To settle this question, it will be necessary to find some one enterprising enough to run the risk of experimenting with it, and to sacrifice his health or his life in backing his opinion. If he is wise he will be cautious, and will only commit himself to a little bit at a time. His tongue and his organic sensations will instruct him, provisionally, whether it is ' good to eat ', and he will report about it accordingly. The value of his report will of course depend on the facts (1) that there has already been established in the human race a certain agreement about what is good to eat, and that what is sweet to one man does not normally taste acrid to another, and (2) that the established tastes are not utterly unrelated to our true good in the way of bodily nutriment, *i.e.* are not wholly wrong. Thus a certain agreement of tastes about the good-to-eat, and a certain rightness of these tastes, are presupposed. Now may not the same assumption be made about the human search for the good generally? We saw in the beginning that human beings do agree, largely and broadly, about the things

they think 'good', though they vary greatly in the theoretic reasons they give for their agreement. And this *sensus communis*, the consensus of mankind, can hardly be wholly wrong, unless an extreme pessimism is wholly right.

Accordingly we seem entitled to experiment with opinions about the good-for-man. They diverge in many directions, but some seem more promising than others. We may select these and test them, tentatively, by acting on them and noting the consequences, advancing cautiously and a little way at a time, withdrawing before the opposition of hard facts, winning over rather than crushing dissent, continually readjusting our opinions and ever learning from experience, until we arrive at a general agreement that so-and-so is good and right. This agreement will probably not be strictly universal; but those who do not share it, like the persons who do not like oysters and cannot stomach caviare, will submit and keep silent, because they themselves will feel that they must be abnormal and wrong, just because they are not able to assent to the conclusions of mankind, and yet cannot make out a case against their rightness.

In this way then it is not inconceivable that the best type of man should eventually be determined, and that Eugenics and Civilization should reach an agreement about the principles on which the former should reform the latter.

IV

EUGENICS AND EDUCATION

Prefatory Note

This essay is a conflation of two papers, one on *Eugenical Scholarships*, contributed to the *Oxford and Cambridge Review* for October 1908, the other on *Practicable Eugenics in Education*, contributed to the first international Congress of Eugenics held in London in July 1912. A special point has been added to the argument for a recognition of the eugenical value of the old Scholarship System by the new statutes imposed on Oxford and Cambridge by the present Commission. These reduce the competition value of college scholarships to £30, but permit the scholar to apply for additional grants from his college, and, after investigation of his circumstances (with an 'annual review' by the college authorities), to be awarded up to £100 a year. It will be observed that this regulation does not wholly extinguish the honour + profit aspect of the scholarship, though it somewhat weakens its pecuniary attraction for the well-to-do. And so long as the administration of these statutes is left to the college authorities, no very serious departure from the present operation of the Scholarship System need, perhaps, be feared. But the example of Oxford and Cambridge may prove infectious and lead to a further spread of the eleemosynary principle to the schools; also, further State interference may deprive the colleges of the control over their scholarships, and may wreck the whole system. The

result will be to hamstring the whole British system of education.

I

Science is beginning to protest against the reckless way in which the present organization of society is endangering the future of the human race. For the evidence is accumulating, and is already convincing to the more far-sighted, that the present ordering of all civilized societies, and particularly of our own, is promoting not the improvement of the human race, but its degeneration, and that at a very rapid rate. As at present organized, society wastes its good material and extirpates its better stocks, while recruiting itself from its inferior elements. It does this unconsciously and unintentionally, but at a growing rate. It does not *mean* to favour the survival of the less fit; but it is so organized that in point of fact it *does*. This is due to the fact that the upper, and apparently more favoured, classes of the social scale are perpetually dying out, because, though their death-rate is low, their birth-rate is very much lower. Hence they can keep up their numbers only by the rise of ability from below. The lower strata of society, on the other hand, though they have a higher death-rate (which, if it is selective and weeds out weaklings, is not wholly evil), multiply so freely that they not only fill the gaps in the

upper strata, but increase the total population. Thus quantity increases, but quality deteriorates. All of this follows inevitably from the fact that in every society, more or less, but more in modern times than in ancient, merit is recognized and ability rewarded. It is rewarded by social promotion; the able rise in the social scale. But their reward entails unforeseen consequences which recoil upon the society that bestows it. The effect is twofold. In the first place the lower classes are continually drained of their ability; their average must deteriorate because their best men are taken from them. Consequently they must be getting stupider, especially as it is precisely the feeble-minded who breed most copiously. Secondly, the ability which is promoted, and rises in the world, is largely wasted. It is sterilized by rising into a class in which the rate of reproduction is inadequate. And it is wasted more rapidly than that which is native to the class; for an able man, ambitious of rising, is even more tempted to postpone marriage and to restrict his offspring than those who are ' born in the purple '. Thus the social rewarding of merit becomes a copious source of racial deterioration.

It also seems probable that the self-destructiveness of civilization is no new thing, but that we are only accelerating processes which have been operative more or less ever since the

world grew to be civilized. Now theoretically this is a very interesting conclusion. For it explains a great deal about history. It explains why the human race does not improve, why man for man we do not seem to be any better than the ancients, nor even, in the eyes of impartial scientists, intrinsically superior to many savages. It explains why civilizations have in the past decayed, why throughout history the proud ruling races have died out, why the meek, the descendants of their slaves and subjects, the hewers of wood and drawers of water, have inherited the earth. In a variety of ways the ruling races have ruled themselves out, for a variety of reasons civilized societies die off at the top, and it is folly to imagine that so long as we repeat their errors we shall escape their fate. The complex machinery of civilized society does not run itself: it needs men to man it, and if a society is unable to provide the men capable of controlling its machinery, it will only precipitate the ruin of the race. It is more essential than ever, therefore, that a modern society should put capable men at its head and enable them to rise to the control of things, while nothing is more ominous than that personal success should have so often to be purchased by racial extinction. A society in which this occurs habitually is organized so as to debase itself. True, the 'proletariat' from below, after a fashion, still supplies the

gaps at the top, and enters on the inheritance of the mighty men of old, and this, perhaps, is 'social justice'; but it should not delude the average man into thinking that he is a superior being entitled to look down on essential achievements he could never rival. The inventor of the wheel, or even of a new mode of chipping flints, may well have been as great a genius as the human race has produced, and it accords well with this that the early palæolithic races seem to have possessed a cranial capacity not less, but greater, than our own. For in the dim red dawn of man the fool-killing apparatus of Nature was terribly effective, and society could do but little to mitigate its horrors, and to protect its inefficient members.

Now the case is different, for social *contra-selection* offers manifold facilities for the survival of the unfit. It is theoretically interesting to see how this is done, but practically such contra-selection is dangerous, and not to be regarded with complete complacency, even though we see that it may be largely inevitable and ethically salutary. But it is evident that even now there are limits to the power of a society to shield its members. It relieves the pressure on the individual largely by weakening the whole; and it is clearly impossible to keep a society collectively progressive, and even alive, if its members individually degenerate beyond a certain point. In spite of a growing control

over Nature, which better methods of transmitting knowledge render possible, there must come a point at which ancestral virtue and inherited capital can no longer ensure the survival of an effete race of fools and weaklings.

II

All existing societies, moreover, are probably much nearer this danger-point than they usually suppose. For the great institutions, which have the social function of transmitting the treasures of accumulated knowledge from generation to generation, are always liable to get out of order, and to engender so much noxious rubbish as to clog their working and to poison humanity. Religions reduce to ritual and become spiritually dead. States ossify into bureaucracies, which crush and sterilize all germs of progress. Worst of all, there is a standing danger that educators should become the worst foes to education. There is probably no system of education, and no university, in the world which does not tend to an over-production of pedantry and dogmatism, and which, if it were conducted wholly according to the ideas of the 'experts' whose duty it is to run it, would not become worse than useless socially. For the experts, if left to themselves, tend to develop professional ideals and standards of value of their own, which grow independent of considerations of

social welfare, and frequently run counter to them. But if there should occur at any time a general breakdown in the educational machinery which transmits the knowledge which is power and means social security, it is evident that a society may be propelled irreparably on the declivity that leads to its destruction. No society, therefore, is safe unless it is constantly on its guard against its own weaknesses, against the clogging of its institutions by their own waste products and by the excesses of their virtues, against the repression of ability and the preservation and promotion of unfitness, against the excessive delays in perceiving when old adjustments have broken down and when new devices and new knowledge are needed to adapt human life to new conditions.

The social problem is so complex, and we are still so ignorant, that any radical scheme of eugenics which presupposes, or even aims at, sudden and drastic changes in human nature, as all the utopias have hitherto done, is scientifically out of the question. It is more than enough to satisfy any reasonable ambition to counteract to some extent the prevalent tendencies to racial decay; and this is not only possible, but vitally necessary. Such attempts, we have seen, must rely largely on a proper treatment of education: for it would be vain to provide the right men if they could not be rightly trained. Education must be made to

help eugenics, and if we struggle manfully against some of the most popular, but unscientific, of educational delusions, we may conserve and improve some eugenically valuable institutions, and implant in the young eugenical sentiments which in due course will bear fruit in better morals and more serviceable citizens.

III

No system of education has ever been perfect; but in our new-born zeal to educate every one, we have rather forgotten that the great failure of education has always lain in its dealings with the powerful and rich. Not even men of genius have succeeded in educating princes. Nero was no credit to the pedagogical skill of Seneca, nor Dionysius to Plato's, nor Christina to Descartes', while Aristotle and Alexander seem to have gone each his own way by mutual consent. Nor at the present day can it be said that Eton, though its King's Scholars are selected from the pick of British intellect, contributes in like proportion to our intellectual achievement. Yet a thoroughly efficient and strenuous Eton would contribute far more to the national welfare than ten elementary schools of the same size.

It may be suggested, therefore, that it is precisely because of the difficulty of educating them that the highest classes have failed to

maintain themselves. It seems at first a paradox that it is precisely those for whom most is done who achieve least, that those classes whom society endows with all the human heart desires and all that makes life worth living should find it most difficult to keep alive and should be in greatest danger of extinction. Satire has often noted that the sole merit of the *grand seigneurs* was merely *de se donner la peine de naître* ; and nowadays even this appears to be becoming too much trouble for them—or for their parents. Yet a psychologist has no difficulty in resolving this paradox : it is precisely because these favourites of fortune already have what most desire, *and have to work for*, that they degenerate. To inherit wealth, rank, power, and honour without effort of their own deprives them of the ordinary objects of human ambition and of the chief motives to exertion. Even if they desired to lead a life of social service, democratic jealousy would distrust and often baffle them. So they are driven into an idle life of frivolous amusement, succumb to its manifold temptations, and, often pleasantly enough, eliminate themselves. But should not those responsible for our social order reflect that if it is right to reward ability in one generation by wealth and power, it cannot be right to render wealth and power the instruments for destroying this same hereditary merit in the next ? Should they not reflect

upon the problem of equipping the young of the upper classes with an adequate motive to make the best of themselves physically, mentally, and morally, to prevent them from succumbing to the extra moral strains of their position? To abolish inheritance would not do this. It would (1) diminish the output of valuable work which is now due to the desire to support one's family, and (2) it would diminish further the output of children in the upper classes, the shortage in which is so perilous.

IV

In dealing with the middle classes the educational problem is much simpler. They are the classes in which the social order stimulates and justifies ambition, in which the effort to rise has good prospects, and the rewards of ability and strenuousness are high. The youth of these classes, consequently, form the educator's best material, and the source of most of the efficient intelligence by which the work of life is carried on.

Nor can society be charged with not providing adequate careers for ability in the professions. Its failure here is of another sort. In all the professions (except perhaps that of the actress) the young are underpaid, and established reputations are overpaid. It would be eugenically preferable to do the opposite. Yet

the existing practice is largely due to unintentional stupidity, and failure to discover ability soon enough. Now to the individual this system brings compensation, if he lives long enough, because he continues to be rewarded for work he has done long ago, and even is no longer capable of doing, and is eventually raised to the status of a 'grand old man' whom ancient institutions delight to honour, by dint of sheer longevity. But eugenically this social *hysteresis*, this delay in recompensing merit, has a fatal effect. It renders the capable, ambitious, and rising members of the professional classes unduly sterile, owing to compulsory celibacy, postponement of marriage, overwork, etc. Thus a large proportion of the ability which rises to the top of the social ladder lasts only for one generation, and does not permanently benefit the race. It is evident, moreover, that precisely in proportion as a society improves the opportunities of the able to rise, it must accelerate the elimination of fitness in the racial stock. So long as a relatively rigid social order rendered it almost impossible for ability to rise from the ranks, reservoirs of ability could accumulate unseen in the lower social strata, and burst forth in times of need, as in the French Revolution: but the more successfully a *carrière ouverte aux talents* is instituted, the more surely are these strata *kept drained*, and incapacitated from

retrieving the waste of ability in the upper layers of society. Now it is doubtless true that the *primary* need of society is to find persons capable of conducting its affairs ably, and that a social order which does not allow ability to rise is therefore bad : but nations cannot with impunity so order themselves as to eliminate the very qualities they most admire and desire, and must husband their resources in men as in the other sources of their wealth and welfare. How then under the existing conditions can our resources best be conserved ?

V

It should be observed in the first place that, without the least theoretical intention, the merely practical exigencies of education have in England gradually produced a system and a sentiment which to some extent counteract the mischiefs we have mentioned, and potentially, at least, may have considerable eugenical value, a value which could be enormously increased by relatively slight modifications. This system is not deficient in psychological subtlety, and differs in certain important respects from anything that exists elsewhere.

It is remarkable for the comparatively slight emphasis it lays on intellectual education. It seems to have despaired altogether of utilizing for educational purposes the alleged desire for

knowledge for its own sake, the universality of which Aristotle could assume as a truism in the Greek world. Not that it is utilitarian, and offers much that the youthful mind can recognize as useful knowledge. On the contrary the staple subjects of a ' liberal ' education seem so ' useless ' that it is thought that only the well-to-do can afford to study them ; their real use is to serve as a caste-mark or class-distinction. But they evince their ' liberality ' in another way ; they are *liberally endowed.* Care is taken that it shall pay a clever boy exceedingly well to study them.

It would, however, be erroneous to accuse the system on this account of a coarse commercialism : its commercialism is singularly subtle and attractive. For though prizes and scholarships are valuable, the hunt for them, which absorbs, trains, and sometimes strains a boy's intellectual interests, is not a mere pursuit of gain. In the preparatory schools boys are stimulated to overcome their native (and pardonable) indolence by the glorious prospect of getting scholarships in the public schools ; in the public schools by the prospect of getting scholarships at the university. The allurement of a scholarship is by no means a simple or ignoble thing ; it consists in a subtle combination of gain and glory which gratifies and fosters the competitive instincts of boys, masters, and parents alike. Scholarships are

great *honours* as well as great prizes, and no one need disdain to win them. Nor is their appeal entirely or mainly selfish: a boy who wins a scholarship feels that he helps his parents and secures an 'honour' for his institution, although it may sound somewhat absurd to hear little fellows of ten or eleven boasting of the excellence of their school, because 'we have this year got the first scholarships at Winchester and at Eton'.

Thus the powerful attraction of the system depends largely on the mixture of motives to which it appeals. It utilizes the desire to excel and the spirit of competition; it offers prospects of distinction almost as flattering to boyish vanity as the athletic system which we shall examine later. It stimulates the teachers similarly: for scholarships won by their pupils redound to their honour and profit, and the competition for them ministers to their sporting instincts. So it is not too much to say that the Scholarship System forms the backbone of our education, in so far as it is intellectual, and that the intellectual efficiency of the English schools and colleges, which is far from despicable, rests essentially on this system.

Its very faults and excesses are singularly congenial to the national character. The turning of charitable endowments into prizes for the intellectually fit is an outcome of the

deeply rooted and truly British love of competitive sport. Examinations cannot but be more or less competitive, and the impulse to go forth and excel somebody in some trial of wits or strength is, on the whole, a salutary one. It seems a valuable preparation for so competitive a world as ours. And Socialist proposals to substitute an infinitely organized and absolutely tame horde of 'comrades' for the self-reliance and the initiative of the existing individualism would demand a revolution in national character as well as in institutions. As yet our education, at least, is distinctly individualistic. What wonder then that British boys and British schoolmasters should develop competitive instincts and indulge them by winning scholarships? Schoolmasters enjoy beating other schools, and boys enjoy beating other boys. Moreover, it is only by making scholarships large and conspicuous prizes that intellectual distinction can, in the eyes of boys, parents, and public, vie with the feats of athletic prowess, which yield far more obvious and visible means of advertisement and display.

VI

The Scholarship System, however, is only one branch of high-class English education, and probably the less important and effective half of it. The other half we may call the Athletic

System. This is an admirably skilful use of the play-instinct and the desire for physical movement which are natural in adolescence, and turns them into instruments of a sort of moral education. Boys like to play games, and admire proficiency in them ; *ergo* they shall all be made to play them and taught to enjoy that verbal paradox a ' compulsory game ', and shall get therefrom not only physical exercise but also moral training, and learn discipline and self-subordination. Nay more, there shall be based on athletic distinction a whole social order, and all shall learn to bow down before and reverence an aristocracy of skill and strength. Finally there shall thus be generated a love of bodily exercise and a taste for outdoor life, which in after life will exact a certain ' fitness ' of body and soul and appreciably conduce to sanity and health. To conceive this ideal of ' fitness ', often dimly and crudely enough, is probably the most important thing the average boy learns at an English public school, and not remotely connected with the practical success of the Englishman in after life. It atones for many hours wasted on ' gerund-grinding ' pedantry in the teaching of the classics and on unpsychological unpracticality in the teaching of mathematics. Such, in barest outline, is the *rationale* of the Athletic Branch of English education, a system so subtle that not all the world's psychologists in solemn conclave

assembled could have excogitated anything half so efficient.

VII

For it is evident that the system as a whole makes a certain appeal also to the rich, and is productive of a certain measure of efficiency even in Eton and Harrow. A son of wealthy parents does not *need* a scholarship; but the presence and example of a select band of scholarship-holding, clever boys, and the hope of winning a distinction, may incite him to work and to train his mind—to his own benefit and that of the community. Or again his competitive instincts may be stimulated by the continuous series of examinations to which a thoroughly Darwinian scheme subjects him. More frequently, no doubt, the sons of the rich prefer to devote their energies to the Athletic Branch of the System, in which the rewards of excellence are quite as great or greater. The great Civil Service Examination, indeed, still selects into the Home and Indian Civil Service intellectuals whose minds are efficient in extorting marks from examiners who have not seen them; but the athletic ideal prevails in the Civil Service of Egypt, the Sudan, and the rest of the Empire. Professionally a 'Blue' is a greater asset, and a much greater advertisement, than a 'First', for a schoolmaster, a lawyer, a business man, or even a clergyman.

No longer would a Dean of Christ Church follow Gaisford in advising ambitious youth to practise the writing of Greek verse as "an elegant accomplishment which not infrequently leads to posts of considerable emolument in the Church", or a Master of Balliol, Jowett, in valuing a First Class in *Literae Humaniores* at £8000. The 'scholar' no longer meets the spiritual requirements of the age, and the 'athlete' is quite as likely to 'organize' his parish well, while he is manifestly fitter to teach boys what they really want to know. In short the system thoroughly suits the British character, and really works so well that we have quite forgotten how anomalous it is, and how queer it must seem to those who are not accustomed to it. Those who are will realize that to abolish it is impossible, and to advocate its abolition a piece of quixotism no eugenist will waste his energy upon.

VIII

He will consider rather how this system may be improved and extended. And in the first place the Athletic Branch will need attention. It is evident that it already recognizes an ideal, the ideal of 'fitness', which has great eugenic value. This ideal merely needs to be intellectualized and spiritualized by including in the notion of fitness, all exercise of human

faculty, even of brains. It ought not to be impossible to convince the British boy that he ought to aim at *all-round* ' fitness ', and that this includes skill in the use of brain as well as muscle, and the moral capacity of adjusting his action to the moral order of society and of improving that order ; or otherwise, that there are common forms of ' unfitness ' which are intellectual and moral, and not merely physical. If the scope of the athletic spirit can be thus extended, it may not only arouse an intrinsic interest in intellectual education which is at present undeveloped, but may also mitigate the excessive stimulation of the competitive instincts by the Scholarship System.

That at present the Scholarship System is unhealthily competitive seems probable enough. It is not, as we saw, that it appeals solely, or even mainly, to the love of gain : there is enough honour mixed with the gain to make all desire to win scholarships as a manifest proof of ability, and enough gain mixed with the honour to silence the objection that scholarship-hunting according to the recognized rules is an unprofitable sport. As a rule the whole affair is conducted in a fine sportsmanlike spirit, both by the teachers and by the taught. The ' best ' scholarships are not necessarily the most profitable, but those which are traditionally regarded as the ' blue-ribbon ' competitions, for which all the best candidates are entered, and

which consequently remain the best for this same reason. Nor are the intellectual race-horses, whom their teachers thus delight to train for the greater glory of the institutions with which they are connected and their own, overstrained or damaged; the system, though it frankly neglects the average mind, gets a great deal of work out of the superior intelligences and produces as a rule a well-trained efficient mind which can direct itself on anything. Nevertheless it produces a mental attitude which is not wholly salutary, precisely because it makes such a strong appeal to the sporting spirit. It engenders a tendency to regard all knowledge as instrumental merely to a competitive game, and a willingness to tolerate and get up without reflection or criticism any sort of nonsense, provided only that it can be manifestly shown to pay for the purposes of some examination. It is evident that this temper is, both in itself anything but conducive to the accumulation of knowledge, and also that it is insufficiently resistant to the pedantry of examiners. For it measures the value of all subjects simply by its mark-getting efficacy in what is regarded as an essentially useless pursuit, to which social convention has artificially added a commercial value. Probably intellectual education would yield better results, both as mental and as moral training, if the intrinsic usefulness (in the widest sense)

of all knowledge might be hinted at, and if, from the premiss that the subjects of a 'liberal education' are intrinsically 'useless', the inference were not drawn that the more useless a study was made the better it was educationally.

IX

What other reforms of the Scholarship System should we ask for? Would it, for example, be a real reform to restrict scholarships to the poor, instead of 'wasting' them upon those whose fathers can well afford to educate them without assistance? It is often argued that the existing system of awarding scholarships amounts to a gross perversion of the original purpose of these aids to learning. Intended for the poor, they have become the perquisites of the rich. If this abuse were stopped, large sums now squandered on the wealthy would be rendered available for the needy and deserving.

This view is plausible, but fallacious. For (1) it is not correct historically. It is true that many of our school and university endowments were founded for poor scholars in the Middle Ages; but their motive was not to help the poor, but to recruit the clergy. In the Middle Ages no middle class existed, and the upper class was both by necessity and preference devoted to warfare; hence the great mass of

the clergy were perforce drawn from the lower classes, and had to receive social support during their education. Scholarships restricted to the poor, therefore, were a natural and rational adaptation to the wants of the age. But to feed the Church is no longer the one aim of a modern university. All pursuits nowadays demand scientific study and systematic preparation; and universities should minister to *all* the higher studies, and train recruits for all professions. Consequently there is no reason why universities should not cater also for the intellectual needs of the well-to-do. They should aim at attracting the best ability, from whatever section of the community it can be drawn, by whatever means are found most effectual, and then at giving it the best training. Higher education is of necessity expensive, and if high salaries have to be offered to secure good teachers, and good scholarships to attract good students, the money so spent must be reckoned among the necessary expenses. It is clear, therefore, that the *raison d'être* of the poor scholar of the mediæval type has mainly disappeared and that the academic problem is how to get hold of the *best* scholar, irrespective of his origin. Nor (2) would it do anything to improve the education of the rich, which we have seen to be the great social crux. Many a clever boy will ask himself: Why should I become a scholar rather than a cricketer, if I

am to be rendered ineligible for scholarships? Thus (3) educational standards would be lowered in several ways. The inducements there are for the able among the rich to go in for intellectual exertion would be diminished. Social respect for intellectual achievement would be diminished. For whereas at present the winners of intellectual distinctions are admitted to have won a certain distinction in a sportsmanlike fashion, it might come about that the acceptance of a scholarship would affix a certain social stigma, as tends to be the case in American universities, where scholars as such play no part in university life, and even such intellectual distinction as is implied by election to the Φ.B.K. Society is as nothing compared with election to one of the social societies or clubs. It would enhance the predominance of athleticism, which is already excessive.

(4) Wealth is a relative term, and the practical difficulties of deciding when a father could afford to send his son to an expensive school or college without a scholarship would be considerable, and could not be solved without considering the total circumstances of the family. As it is, a father can sometimes pay for *one* son, but not (unaided) for two or three; but he is enabled to do so by the scholarships won by the first. But even if he could afford it, it does not follow that he would. The winning of scholarships has extensively come to be

regarded alike by parents, teachers, and the children themselves, as a sort of test of whether the minds of the latter are good enough to be worth cultivating by an expensive education. Schools and colleges, therefore, which confined their scholarships to the poor might find that they had cut off the source of the supply of most of their ability and diverted it into 'business' or technical education, that they had deprived themselves of the chief stimulus to intellectual exertion, and had gained in return merely a not very valuable and despised class (for all those really brilliant are already enabled to win scholarships) of not very able minds, who could not be educated into anything but laborious dullards and whose artificial hoisting was a very dubious benefit to the community.

x

(5) For a eugenist, however, the chief objection to this supposed 'reform' is that it lacks the eugenical value of the existing system, which may be displayed as follows. Francis Galton's epoch-making researches have gone far to prove that in the long run the success of a nation depends on the quality of its citizens far more than on any of its institutions or material conditions. It is on the intelligence, vigour, virtue, and efficiency of its members that the greatness of a nation ultimately rests. But over this

human material a nation has no direct control. It cannot obtain genius by advertising for it. It has to take the children as they are delivered by their parents, and to make the best of them. Hence the national importance of education. But no system of education can ' make a silk purse out of a sow's ear ', or turn a feeble-minded fool into a genius.

Proceeding further to study the hereditary transmission of intelligence, Galton came to the conclusion that it follows the same law as the inheritance of physical qualities. There are, moreover, great differences in the intrinsic value, for social purposes, of different sorts of infants. The idiotic, feeble-minded, diseased, and insane have *negative* value ; they are a burden on the community. The social value at birth of a country labourer's baby he works out at no more than £5, whereas the child whose intelligence qualifies it to become an inventor or an organizer, or a performer of the more difficult and valuable social functions, may be worth thousands of pounds to the community in which it ' takes birth '. Hence he argues that if only the latter sort could be discriminated from the former and fostered, national prosperity would be assured. But how is this discrimination to be effected ? Fortunately for us nature indicates the way. Intelligence and ability are hereditary. We can argue, therefore, from tested ability in the parents to

probable ability in the children, with some confidence. Not, of course, that ability does not occur in the lower strata of society. It does, and in the aggregate any society may even have to draw the bulk of its ability from its 'lower' classes; it is therefore foolish not to construct a ladder by which such ability may mount to the top. But it is still more foolish if, after enabling ability to rise, it fails to make the conditions such that ability can perpetuate itself. For the *probability* of getting able children is vastly greater, if they spring from able parents. Hence it is vitally important for a nation to encourage, or at least not to check, the multiplication of its abler stocks.

Now this is where the scholarship system comes in. The winners of scholarships come in the main from the professional or upper middle classes, the lawyers, doctors, parsons, schoolmasters, etc., in whom the intelligence has to be strenuously exercised in order to win success in life. And in general we may take it that intelligence and ability do lead to success among professional men.

Now for men so situated the Scholarship System is simply invaluable. It relieves the professional man of much of his anxiety about the education of his family and holds out to parents of good ability a reasonable probability that their children will, by their cleverness, win for themselves the means to the best and

most expensive education. Hence, whether the parents themselves succeed in their profession or not, the future of the children is secured. So there will reasonably be less reluctance to produce them. It may well be that fifteen or twenty years later the parents can well afford to pay for their education themselves. But it will then be too late to produce the children. Hence the prospect of getting children educated at little expense by means of scholarships may be a real influence in increasing their number.

If, on the other hand, poverty, and not brains, is made the basis of selection, the competition will be so severe that the prospect of a scholarship will not enter into parental calculations: for, unfortunately, poverty and ambition are much commoner than ability. Hence the Scholarship System, as it stands, is a valuable institution; it acts as a distinct eugenical inducement, which, in these days, when the most valuable classes are bisected in every generation, is very welcome. It could, moreover, be enormously extended and strengthened, and made into a pillar of ' positive ' eugenics.

XI

The infusing of a eugenical spirit into the Athletic Branch of British education would so evidently be comparatively easy that it need not be enlarged on in great detail. The ideals

of fitness and efficiency merely need to be broadened, so as to include moral and intellectual qualities and various forms of skill, instead of being restricted as now to expertness in two or three officially selected 'games'. The youthful mind is naturally prone to hero-worship, and could easily be taught to recognize this ideal of fitness. And what is more, its appeal would be universal, and, even if society did not honour it as it should and would, it would be its own reward. For no one could admire it, without striving to achieve it, nor attempt it without benefiting himself and improving the level of the race. Every one would feel that whatever his endowment, he could make himself fitter than he was, and that it was worth while to do so in some direction in which his ability and bent indicated; he would not feel, as many boys do now, that they were not cut out for distinction in cricket and football, and conclude that they were utterly useless and give up trying.

Hence we should go some way towards solving the problem of supplying the highest classes with an ideal and a personal incentive to self-improvement. It is possible even that this ideal would appeal particularly to them: for they are not, on the whole, deficient in the qualities that would enable them to approach it, if they chose. If so, there might gradually arise out of them, and out of the eugenically

best of the whole community, a new and real nobility, based on real superiority, and not as now recruited by the proceeds of unhallowed unions of wealth and politics, and this would absorb, or perhaps suppress, our present sham nobility, which has become a social institution that means nothing biologically. Such a real nobility would support itself on its intrinsic merits, and no doubt engender a *well-founded* pride of birth that would keep it both pure and prolific : for to have a large family would be approved of and admired only in the fit, and hence would afford a more striking display of social ostentation than dresses or jewellery : and thus the spirit of Cornelia, the mother of the Gracchi, might return to earth.

XII

And let it not be said that the eugenical ideal is anti-democratic : it is anti-egalitarian, but it will be anti-democratic only if the intrinsic inequalities of men are such that some must have all power and others none. But this there is much reason to doubt. On the other hand it is morally beneficial to every man to acknowledge superiority, and likewise conducive to the stability of society ; nor does this even hurt a man's self-esteem, if he can feel himself as superior in some respects as he is inferior in others. Thus the aristocratic

principle, in so far as eugenics sanctions it, is not wedded to any special form of government; it means only that we should not commit the folly, knowingly or unknowingly, of trying to eradicate the best. Finally, it may be pointed out that such an infusion of a eugenical spirit into our educational methods, as has been sketched, does not interfere with any one's freedom, nor require any legislation; it is wholly an affair of transforming sentiment. It would influence individuals mainly by pervading the social atmosphere they breathe; if, subsequently, legislation came about to enforce the general practice, it would only codify the conclusions of public opinion and experience.

V

PLATO AND EUGENICS

Prefatory Note

This essay, which I have included with some hesitation, is the oldest in the book, as the curious can verify by noting the reference to it in *Humanism*, p. 18 (or in *Mind* for April 1902, p. 196). It was written in the Long Vacation of 1899, in compliance with a request from a pupil who, as secretary of an Essay Society, was seeking for papers for the next term. But it was never published, because it was too good to be wasted on an unappreciative public and too valuable as a shield against other requests similar to that which generated it. It has in consequence often been read to College Societies since, very much, I apprehend, as Plato's dialogues, and especially the dialogue which inspired it, the *Republic*, used to be read to the Platonic School at the request of its members. And, of course, like the *Republic*, it used to receive retouches on such occasions. Its frivolous literary form is due to this origin and history, and should be taken as an adaptation to its original audience. For to have to expound one's ideas to acute and youthful minds, not *ex cathedra* but informally, is a great prophylactic against academic stuffiness. I must further confess that by reading this essay so often, I have learnt much about the objections which eugenics naturally provoke, and about the progress eugenical ideas were making. I used also to be enabled to gauge the acuteness of my audience

by their reactions. For while it was general to fasten upon the personal applications of the scheme, it was somewhat rarely that my audience perceived the subtle compliment implied in my reading the paper to them. They did not usually perceive that it was precisely they, or their likes, who would be likely to be the beneficiaries of the scheme it advocated. Besides this the scheme has the outstanding merit that it does not postulate State support, and can be started at any time by private enterprise. It needs only money—like the Eugenics Society.

Plato was not only a great philosopher, but also the first eugenist, the founder of the Kallipolis, as well as the inventor of the Ideal Theory. Both of these revolutionary achievements are enshrined in the great dialogue, the *Republic*, on which, in Oxford, his fame as a philosopher mainly rests. For the *Republic* is an appreciable fraction of ' Greats ', and so its educational value is immense. It is due largely to its efficacy in upsetting the equilibrium and natural conservatism of young and plastic minds, while at the same time it reassures the aforesaid conservatism by exhibiting the hoary antiquity of so much that tries to pass itself off as the newest radicalism. When one comes to think of it, does it not restore one's confidence in the stability of human nature to realize at what a safe distance we have kept Plato's Ideal State to this day ?

Plato himself, however, seems to have felt about it differently. When instead of trans-

lating his ideas into fact Dionysios the Elder sold him into slavery, Plato resented the sell even more than the sale. But having recovered his liberty and his temper, he set to work again upon a second State, as it is written in the *Laws*. And it would appear also from a passage in this dialogue [1] that he was prepared to go on, and to write yet a third version of the perfect State, should there be any demand for it. Before, however, he could accomplish this, he obtained his remove out of this wicked world into, we may suppose, one of those serene and heavenly spheres he was so well fitted to adorn. And so we have heard from him no more, as the wave-length of no heaven has yet been discovered.

How then was a humble pedant like myself to get Plato to give an authentic account of his Third State, and to bring the ideal Kallipolis up to date ? The problem seemed insoluble : yet it all came about very simply, and in a way no philosopher should have found at all difficult.

In a ' phrontistery ' or ' thinking-shop ' like Oxford you are of course familiar with the idealistic doctrine that the world is primarily your experience, and that a reality which is not and can not be experienced is strictly unknowable and of no account. You may have admired such a doctrine at a respectful distance, or even have tried, and failed, to believe it,

[1] 739 E.

but you have probably not realized the reason of your failure. The simple reason is that philosophers have neglected to test their doctrine by working out its practical consequences. Yet these are not in this case unworthy of note. For instance, it has been maliciously objected that such idealism destroyed the distinction between dream and reality, and that no reason could be alleged for denying that our whole life was a dream. And idealists have mostly been weak enough to regard this as an objection, rather than as a triumphant corollary from their principles, affording them a welcome means of calling into existence new worlds (of experience) to redress the balance of the old, and needing only a little courage and ingenuity to enable them to escape from all the annoyances, dullnesses, and absurdities of our everyday existence.

Thus it will follow that if my real world is a dream, I am really asleep, as I fear you may be before this story ends. Hence I might awake one morning and find myself in another world, into which the transition was effected by simply waking up. But here is the rub. It is very hard to get thoroughly aroused. Very few have the art of waking themselves with any approach to accuracy and completeness; for the most part we rely on others—in Oxford more especially on our scouts. Now you will probably agree with me when I assert that a scout's

way of waking one up is both offensive and inefficient. He stamps into one's room, noisily upsets a water-can into one's bath, and makes a random assertion about the time. No wonder we never thoroughly awake and, though we get up and walk (in our sleep), drowse on in the dream we call life until the master hand of Death, dissevering us from the dreams of our fellow-men, wakes us up—to what ?

That is a question I will not try to answer just now, because all this philosophy is only intended to explain how it is that I am able to give you an account of Plato's present political ideas. By a gigantic effort of the will I woke up one day last Long in that particular sphere of conscious experience in which Plato continues to contemplate all time and all existence. You may call it a heaven or an Island of the Blest, although in philosophic strictness both terms are sufficiently misleading. Nor will I delay you with the details of my method of waking—which I hope eventually to patent—or with a description of the visual appearances and scenery of this new world, although it would doubtless prove interesting to students of meta-geography.

Suffice it to say that, with the help of the well-remembered image on the cover of 'Davies and Vaughan', I easily recognized Plato, and that he far surpassed my expectations. Indeed I had taken the precaution to form none. I

approached him in a reverential manner and expressed my gratification at meeting him. He was graciously pleased to observe that I seemed to possess a spark of the true philosophic 'Eros'. Dissembling my appreciation of this somewhat equivocal compliment, I thanked him, and explained that as it was no inconsiderable part of my functions in the particular phase of the process between Not-Being and Being with which I habitually consorted to expound to the young the beauty, truth, greatness, and goodness of his deathless *Republic*, he could do me great service by answering difficulties which I was often called upon to remove.

'And so I want you to tell me, oh master of all who aspire, what most of my pupils find it hard to believe, namely, whether you really meant your *Republic* to be taken seriously, and whether you would still recommend it, or some similar scheme, as the cure for all social ills?'

'The friends you mention must surely be of the number of those who have never yet seen a jest in any of my writings, and so I do not see how they can doubt my entire seriousness. As for my devising schemes of perfect States, has it never occurred to you that I was speaking to the Athenians of my time and advising what I thought best *for them*?'

'Then do you mean to say that it was really better, for instance, that I may mention

another point which greatly troubles my pupils, to abolish the family ? '

' If you had lived in a family like mine you would perhaps have thought I did not speak unreasonably.'

' Then your *Republic* is not the best State absolutely ? '

' Should I then have gone on to write the *Laws* ? '

' In what sense then was it best ? '

' Best, I thought, at the time and under the circumstances of Hellenic life.'

' Then you would not recommend it to us ? '

' Are not your circumstances different ? '

' But must not the best State be a single and immutable ideal ? '

' How then could it be realized in a state of Becoming ? '

' Is there then no perfect and absolute state of Being to which we can attain ? '

' Perhaps, but I have not yet reached it—and indeed if I had, I should hardly now be conversing with you.'

' In that case your failure is my gain. But tell me, Plato, if that be so, will you not now construct an ideal State which shall be best for us in our so-called twentieth century, or perhaps a little later ? '

' That is no slight thing to ask, my friend, and it may chance that I shall only add to the

perplexities of your pupils by granting your request.'

'Never mind, I need not tell them all you say.'

'You want me, then, to speak freely and to reform radically?'

'Be as radical as you please, provided that you construct the best State, ruled by the best men, the true 'Αριστοκρατία.'

'Very well then, let us begin. Shall I whistle up Socrates, who, I fancy, is just now discussing, in some limbo far from here, the art of dress- and bill-making with the milliner who has just presented Xanthippe's "little account"? He will be glad to change the subject, and will bring his customary crowd of young men; we can then have a real dialogue in the proper form on ἡ τρίτη πολιτεία ἢ περὶ ἀριστοκρατίας.'

'Oh, on no account, Plato, do that! I pray you let Socrates and his boys remain in whatever limbo suits them, prating idly about vulgar things in a commonplace manner. What need have we of the grotesque and unlovely figure of Socrates, whom, I suspect, you put into your dialogues chiefly to tickle or goad the Athenians, and who will compel you, as formerly, to say many things which are trivial and not to our taste, besides giving the undiscerning an opportunity to represent you as a mere reporter of your master's views? I, of course, know

this is false, but both for this and for other reasons I dislike Socrates, even as you have drawn him. He is, I grant you, much less offensive than the Socrates of Xenophon and of Aristophanes, but you have none of you been able to avoid some taint of the real man in your pictures, and it shocks me to listen to him claiming to be the originator of your loftiest doctrines and giving utterance to your noblest sentiments. Hence I do not desire him to claim the paternity also of the truths I expect you to elicit now.'

'You speak with a strange animosity of one whom I thought it had become the fashion to rank next to your great prophet Jesus, and yet I will not deny that I, too, have sometimes found the burden of Socrates, whom I took up in the enthusiasm of my first literary effort, hard to bear. So, as you desire it, we will proceed without Socrates, after the manner of the *Laws*, my Oxonian stranger and visitor from another world. And, in order that we may not wander aimlessly over a field of infinite conjecture, tell me where the shoe pinches, as Alcibiades was wont to say.'

'Most gladly: you know, Plato, that I am concerned with that most difficult thing, upon which both you and experience have convinced me the real welfare of States ever depends, the training of the young for the good life. We do not seem to succeed in this much better than

the Athenians did in your time, and that is perhaps the reason why we fail to reach the true aristocracy and continue to wallow in democracies and tyrannies and despotisms of all sorts. Not that we have on that account got rid of a spurious aristocracy, which directly and indirectly corrupts our life, public and private. And so it is no wonder that we still fail to secure the supremacy of the best; for putting before our citizens false ideals of Excellence, Society, the Great Sophist, compels the "golden natures" to pursue them; and when they fail it is said that they are of too soft stuff to make standards of value out of, and they must be hardened by being alloyed with dross of baser metal, not silver—for that we have demonetized—but brass and tin and even dirt, calling it "sand" and "grit", until in the end you would have to crush many tons of such to get back a few ounces of true gold. And even for those whom we esteem excellent we make arduous and steep the road to success, so that for the most part they arrive not at power until they are old and past their work, and well-nigh spent. And then indeed the Many honour them and summon them to the highest council of rulers, and, what seems most strange, declare that their excellence shall be hereditary, and that their eldest sons shall sit in the council and rule over us for ever, so long as any remain who are lawfully begotten accord-

ing to the rites. And some say that this is proper, because excellence of soul is inherited more surely than wealth even in the best-ordered State, which indeed chooses its rulers from those who have shown themselves the strongest; while others again say that all are by nature equal and that none should be given advantages above the rest. But to me neither party seems to speak reasonably; not the lovers of equality, for that they assert what is manifestly false; nor yet the lovers of heredity, for that they absurdly suppose that of all the children of the best only the eldest sons will be worthy. And, what is still more serious, it escapes their notice that at present they have ordered matters so that the children of those they esteem the best, and most of all of their hereditary rulers, are not better than those of others but rather worse, being given every opportunity to become slothful and profligate and worthless in every way, and but little to make the most of their excellences and to become fitted for the service of the State. For why should they live strenuously and laboriously make the most of their native excellence, when they may live pleasantly and easily like the gods of Homer, pursuing every pleasure that their heart desires, and yet continue to rule? Thus does it not come about that we select the best only that we may spoil and destroy them in their offspring, so that with

each generation we become a feebler and inferior folk, descended in growing measure from the ignobler masses who have *not* shown signs of ability and strength ? '

' You take more pains than are necessary, my good sir, to use such words as I used in writing for the Athenians, not knowing, I suppose, that in my dreams I often return to the world I lived in. So I have often wondered at your House of Lords, and perfectly understand what you are wont to call Natural Selection.'

' That indeed, Plato, does not surprise me, for you seem to me to have had no slight inkling of it even in your *Republic*, when you proposed to put conscious selection in its place.'

' Perhaps then you will agree that you might have put your whole difficulty quite briefly, by asserting that Social Selection counteracts Natural Selection to the ruin of the race ? '

' That is in brief what I meant.'

' It is a grave matter and worthy of a long inquiry, while nothing is easier than merely to reform the House of Lords.'

' You would please not only me but all our advanced thinkers, if you told us how you would set about it.'

' With pleasure. You must, as Heraclitus said, think not only of the way up but also of the way down.'

' How do you mean ? '

' If you raise your citizens in proportion as

they show fitness, must you not also lower them in proportion as they show unfitness? If therefore, as you say, the sons of the excellent, though in themselves more likely to be excellent than those of others, yet tend to become corrupted and unworthy in society, you must construct for them a ladder by which they may climb down.'

'I do not quite understand.'

'I mean this. Have you not many kinds of nobles within your House of Lords and without —dukes, earls, barons, and so forth?'

'We have, and some are not even hereditary.'

'Well then, you have only to enact a law that the son of a peer shall not inherit his father's title but that next below it in dignity, and so on, until, if the stock continues to degenerate, it falls back into the common people.'

'You mean that the successor of a duke should be a marquis, the son of a marquis an earl, and so on?'

'Precisely so.'

'I see, Plato, that you would make the descendants of the noble descendants in very deed.'

'How so?'

'They would really descend the ladder whereby their ancestors ascended.'

'Not even your puns can spoil a good idea.'

'But I see another objection.'

'What is it?'

'I fear, Plato, that you will make our House of Lords a very small one.'

'Nay, rather, I would make room in it for the excellence of many who now are shut out from it because they are not rich enough to leave the burden of a peerage to their sons. Moreover, if the son of a peer lives worthily and cultivates his ancestral excellence, he might retain his father's rank, yea and rise above it, whether he were an eldest son or not.'

'But if you allow that, will it not become very easy for the sons of peers to appear worthy?'

'Should it not be easier for those of good stock to convince men that they also are good?'

'Perhaps.'

'In a well-ordered State, moreover, there is no fear lest it should become too easy.'

'I suppose, Plato, you will explain the proper ordering later.'

'Yes; for the present let it suffice that it follows that the desire to retain their honours and to show themselves not inferior to their ancestors will give the sons of the rulers no slight strength wherewith to resist corruption.'

'But hardly enough to resist the evils I mentioned.'

'You did not surely think that a reform of the House of Lords would suffice to establish a true aristocracy? That was merely a small part of my scheme.'

'I am eager to hear the rest of it.'

'Not more so than I am to tell you. But as the subject is difficult, perhaps we had better approach it by an analogy.'

'To whom then shall we go for an analogy?'

'Be not offended if I say, to the dogs.'

'The dogs that Socrates was wont to swear by?'

'Yes, if they are the best dogs.'

'But how shall we get the best dogs, how establish a true aristocracy of canines?'

'That is just the question I was about to ask you. But tell me, have you ever been a breeder of dogs or other animals that have excellence or the reverse with regard to some end?'

'I cannot say that I have myself, and I would that your brother Glaucon were here to answer for me. I have only read about these things, and my conjectures have not been tested by the issue.'

'Perhaps you are not worse off in this respect than every one else in this case. So tell me boldly how you would conjecture that we should set about it to raise a race of dogs as strong and clever and beautiful as possible?'

'I should conjecture that we should start with the strongest and cleverest, best and most beautiful we could find, permitting these only to have offspring, and of such offspring always preserving only the best. And, moreover, I

should train them in every way so as to increase their native excellence.'

'You are quite right, and will oblige me by applying the analogy. Must we not improve the race of men also in similar ways?'

'But surely men are different from animals in many ways.'

'We must attain therefore the same ends by different means.'

'I fear, Plato, you are about to propose something very atrocious. Remember my poor pupils.'

'Did you not say that they read my *Republic*?'

'So I believe. But lest you return to what you proposed there, let me say emphatically that your proposals were not only shocking, but also such as to defeat your purposes. For while wishing to curb the animal desires in men, you really permit indulgence in them without restraint, and that the more freely the braver and better men have shown themselves to be.'

'I do not think that you have quite apprehended my meaning, but I will not now explain. Let me assure you rather that I have no desire to shock, and hope to avoid giving offence.'

'You will not then propose to abolish the family, and to substitute "hymeneal festivals" which hark back to the horrors of primitive promiscuity?'

'Did I not tell you at the outset that I proposed this only for the Greece of my time? And even then I was perhaps wrong, though Aristotle need not have pointed it out in such a niggling and pettifogging way. But you have made a far better thing of the family than ever I thought possible; I shall therefore propose only to reform it.'

'I am relieved to hear it, but it seems to me far harder to reform than the House of Lords.'

'The beautiful is hard.'

'When *you* have overcome the difficulty, *I* shall doubtless perceive the beauty. But do not hesitate to tell me what you have in mind.'

'First of all then, tell me what you think of examinations?'

'That they are a necessary evil.'

'Do you think it possible to discover truth by examination?'

'When I am examining, I am desirous of believing this, when I was examined I used to suspend my judgment until the class list had appeared.'

'Are all examinations equal?'

'No more than all men are.'

'Then some are better than others?'

'Yes, if they are conducted by good examiners.'

'Then if you had the best examiners conducting the best examinations, you would trust

them to discover the truth about the cleverness of those they examined, with such precision as men may? I mean the truth as to their knowledge and intellectual character.'

'Yes, and not a little also as to their moral character, as, for instance, whether they have courage and endurance in facing difficulties and self-control in not allowing the attractions of pleasure to draw them aside from the pursuit of their end.'

'You answer even better than I expected. And now tell me is there not an excellence of the body as well as of the soul?'

'There is, and it is by far more manifest.'

'Then it will be easier to examine it, and to a skilled physician this task would present no serious difficulty?'

'I suppose not.'

'And is there not an excellence which is still more manifest than these?'

'What do you mean?'

'I mean the excellence of the outward form, which men call beauty. And will not this be the easiest of all to examine?'

'By Zeus, Plato, I think you are being carried away by the argument and forget how men's tastes differ. Are you proposing to erect the Judgment of Paris into a perpetual tribunal and set the young men to judge the beauty of the maidens, and the maidens that of the young men? Or would you prefer for

these purposes a jury of British matrons and a select committee of the House of Lords? And would you have them judge us all, so that even I, for instance, should be numbered among the types of British Beauty as, say, No. 38,125,764?'

'Are there not experts who are concerned with beauty of form?'

'You mean the artists?'

'I do.'

'But I doubt whether they could judge fairly. Even Paris, I seem to remember, did not decide without receiving bribes. And even if they judged fairness fairly, would the rest accept their judgments?'

'Perhaps not, but it does not so much matter, seeing that each may, in so manifest a matter, judge for himself.'

'That, Plato, is exceedingly likely to happen, whether you have a tribunal or not.'

'Yet it would be no slight advantage to have a court of arbitration to adjudicate between the claims of rival beauties. But we are getting frivolous, and what I wish to ask you is whether the same man can be examined in all these different respects by those who are competent in regard to them.'

'No doubt he can.'

'And he may be ranked in the first, second, or third class, and so forth, in each case according to his excellence?'

'Certainly.'

'And if he were put in the first class in any or all these tests, he would be delighted with, and proud of, himself?'

'You have but to look around at our First Classes and 'Varsity Blues, oh Plato, to perceive that.'

'And his parents also would be delighted and proud?'

'In the most charming and ludicrous way.'

'And yet more reasonably than at present.'

'How do you mean?'

'I mean that now men are wont to be proud of their ancestors, and the more so the more they conceive them to have been excellent and superior to themselves. And so you often see a silly weakling strutting about and giving himself airs, all because many hundred years ago those whom he supposes to be his ancestors were wise and strong. He is proud of his ancestors, but they, if they observed him, would be heartily ashamed of their descendant. Whence it appears that the inferior is proud of the superior connected with him, but not the superior of the inferior.'

'It appears also that pride of birth involves no slight danger of self-depreciation.'

'Yes, and in a decaying society the superiors men are proud of will be the better men of the past, whereas in an improving society they will rejoice rather in the superiority of the men of

the future that are their work, and concerning their ancestors will say rather with Diomede,

'ἡμεῖς γὰρ πατέρων μέγ' ἀμείνονες εὐχόμεθ' εἶναι.'[1]

'You think then that it is more reasonable to be proud of one's descendants than of one's ancestors?'

'So at least the argument shows.'

'Then the parents and relatives of First Class men and Blues will do right to be proud of them?'

'Aye, and their friends and fellow-townsmen too. And all who hear about them will admire and envy them.'

'And after that what will happen?'

'Put yourself in the position of one who has received first-class certificates for all-round excellence, physical, intellectual, and moral.'

'Most gladly.'

'How would you feel?'

'I should feel "equal to the gods" as the poets say, as though I were one of the elect to whom the world belonged.'

'And would not that be the truth?'

'Perhaps not, if the others did not see it.'

'What if they did?'

'I suppose I should then be able to get almost all that men desire.'

'Yes; because you would be a distinguished man. Your society would be sought after and the rich would be eager to give you their

[1] For we boast ourselves to be far better than our fathers.

daughters in marriage, and the poor to read about all you did in the newspapers, and both would combine to elect you among the rulers. And whatever business you desired to undertake men would assist you, not so much because they loved and admired you, but because they would expect great profit for themselves from associating with so remarkable a man so certain to succeed, so that in the end succeed you would, because all would believe that succeed you must.'

'By the best dog, Plato, my advantages would be as great as those which a dukedom now confers.'

'Aye, and greater. For would you not have the Being as well as the Seeming, the real excellence as well as its reputation in the opinion of others?'

'Truly, your scheme is a most delightful one, and we seem already, with the help of your best dogs, to be running down the true Aristocracy we were pursuing.'

'And yet we have only gone a little way.'

'How so?'

'I beg you to consider some of the difficulties.'

'You mean about the examinations?'

'Yes, and others also.'

'It seems to me, Plato, that although you could perhaps, if you devised the best examinations and found the best examiners and made

it worth their while to examine carefully and dangerous to examine corruptly, test not badly the intellectual and the physical qualities of men, you would find it hard to estimate their moral worth. For you would not, I suppose, surround each man with an army of spies ? '

' That is a difficulty we might overcome if we could get another Prometheus to assist us.'

' What do you mean ? '

' I mean some hero who would steal from heaven a few leaves from the book of the Recording Angel.'

' Are you thinking of the remark that to marry is to domesticate the Recording Angel, and proposing to train the married to watch each other ? '

' Not precisely, although that idea also is not a bad one. I meant only that even on earth men's deeds write their records, and find others to refer to them. And it is not easy to deceive all the people all the time, especially those who see much of you and care much about you. Hence if nothing is known against the character of any one, we may be confident that the record is a clean one. Only let what is known be recorded, and be judged by the examiners.'

' You mean that each man's " dossier " should be kept and that some censors of morals should control it ? '

' I would only legalize officially what is already done unofficially.'

'I see; but do you not think that many of your best men would break down in their moral tests?'

'They might at first.'

'How do you mean?'

'At first many things would happen among the best which would disappoint us, and which we could not explain. Clever, healthy, and moral parents might have children very deficient in all or some of these respects.'

'You mean as a mare may give birth to a mule?'

'No, that is not what I was thinking of. But all men are mules in another way, in that no race of men is pure, as a race of noble horses, or cattle, or dogs is pure. Hence the offspring of the good may always hark back to bad ancestors, or the superior be born in the midst of the inferior. Thus in the beginning our material is very much mixed, as Anaxagoras has well said, *πάντα χρήματα ἦν ὁμοῦ*.'

'*Εἶτα νοῦς Πλάτωνος ἦλθε καὶ διεκόσμησε πάντα*. Excellent!'

'You understand; after the records had been kept for some generations we should know better what to expect.'

'But you would have to compel people to have their records kept: for otherwise I fear many would have good reason to refuse.'

'It would not be necessary to use compulsion. For the advantages of securing a first-

class certificate of fitness would be so great that the best would come forward voluntarily, and soon it would become the greatest disadvantage not to be certificated. It would only be necessary to establish a board of overseers in whom all would have confidence.'

'In that case, Plato, you may enrol me as a supporter of the Hereditary Antecedents Registration Bill (permissive). But another scruple has sprung up in my mind.'

'Do not hesitate to relieve your mind of it.'

'You have indeed shown me how by conscious selection we could obtain a real aristocracy. But you have not explained what would induce the Many to be ruled by them. For you admit, I suppose, that the best are necessarily few?'

'You are right. The best are few and more like gods than men; so few indeed that I would never rely on them alone to establish the perfect State. But I do not admit that those who would *desire* to be better and best would be few in number. On the contrary, all except the very basest would be stirred by the desire to reach the highest measure of excellence they could, to enjoy the honour such excellence would bring, and to avoid the dishonour a refusal to train oneself would involve.'

'You mean that just as in a race many would compete, although one only could win the prize?'

'Exactly. And do you remember how Aristotle, my pupil, conceived a passionate propulsion towards the Divine Perfection to inspire the whole universe and to be the cause of its motion?'

'Indeed I do, and I have often wondered how he came to think so.'

'If then the excellence of a God whom they have not seen and who does nothing for them can set the whole world in motion, how much greater will be the influence on men of the visible excellence of the best who are their rulers?'

'I cannot say how many times as great it will reasonably be.'

'Shall we not agree then that, like the pleasure of the Philosopher-King as compared with that of the Tyrant, it is 729 times as great?'

'Certainly, Plato, if you desire it. It would be cruel to require you to work out so difficult a calculation a second time.'

'Observe also that this desire to make the best of oneself will be a motive which will appeal equally and strongly also to the sons of the rich and powerful, and will soon prevent the advantages of their position from turning to their ruin.'

'Unless indeed they think that their external advantages will put them on an equality with the intrinsic superiority of the best.'

'Surely even the stupidest of them will not

be able to entertain this fancy long. For who will venture to flaunt paste when real diamonds outshine it ? '

' You may be right ; but there are still questions I should like to ask. How, for instance, can you get a superior race established, unless you compel them to mate with others of like excellence ? You must either do that, or allow them to degenerate again by mingling with the inferior.'

' In part I fancy that I have already answered that question. For where there is a universal, though unequal, impulse towards improvement, improvement there will be, though it will be greatest among the best, and in proportion as they are kept pure. But in the first place do you not think that the superior would have a natural repugnance to the idea of mating with an inferior ? '

' Perhaps, but it would be the natural ambition of the inferior to achieve this.'

' Then, too, education and public opinion would encourage the best to marry each other.'

' Doubtless.'

' For the main part, however, I would induce the best to keep pure by rewards rather than by punishments.'

' Of what sort ? '

' I would introduce a new kind of State support, not of the unfit but of the fit.'

' That indeed would be strange.'

'I would offer to every man and woman of first-class excellence a marriage fellowship—how much do you think would be needed?'

'It is not easy to say for one who has never tried it; still most of my friends are wont to complain that they have about £200 less income than they need to live becomingly.'

'Well then, let us be generous, and offer to each of the most excellent of our young folk £200 a year for ten years, on condition that they marry early, that is to say between twenty and thirty, and in their own class. And to impress on them how valuable their children are to the State I would add a proportionate sum for each child they engendered. Reinforcing in this way the attraction of like to like, I should not fear that many would contract *mésalliances* with inferior classes. Even if, however, they should do so, it would be in exchange for no small sum, and their action would at least increase the ability of the rich.'

'I cannot help, Plato, laughing at your eagerness.'

'Why does that seem to you ridiculous?'

'Is it not absurd for two old bachelors like us to be laying down revolutionary regulations according to which men may most fitly marry?'

'Not so absurd as leaving to every fool and knave the power to inflict upon the State the burden of his progeny. And if *we* do not speak out who have nothing to gain by such changes,

how can those come forward who are suspected of desiring support for themselves at the public expense ? '

' You may be right, but the situation strikes me as humorous, as also that you should be proposing the very opposite of what was long the custom in Oxford and in part still is, namely, that fellowships should be *vacated* by marriage.'

' Why not ? For can you tell me what more stupid custom could be imagined than that from which such rules are derived, namely, the celibacy of the only learned class, the clergy, during the Middle Ages. The wonder is that you have not all become idiots.'

' There are many wonders of this sort in history, as, for example, that in spite of the way in which you shut up your women, you Athenians were so strong in body and soul.'

' Yes, I know it was monstrous, but I always protested against the exclusion of the better half of mankind from the highest life.'

' I know you did ; but there seems to me to be another objection on quite another ground to your present proposal.'

' What is it ? '

' Would not the expense be excessive ? '

' That is hardly a matter which need concern us greatly. For provided that we can convince men that our aims are desirable the money needed will be forthcoming.'

' Hm.'

'Do you not think then that the rich will subscribe abundantly to endow Conjugal Fellowships, and when they die will leave their wealth for the noblest and most useful of all purposes, the ennobling of the human race?'

'Surely there are limits even to the generosity of American millionaires.'

'Then might we not find others also who had no children of their own, and to whom no other charitable object seemed equally attractive?'

'Perhaps!'

'At least no object could be worthier. And in time perhaps they could even be persuaded to leave their money away from their own children, if they thought them unworthy, or likely to become so, owing to excessive wealth. Thus, even by private enterprise, we might succeed. And if we had the power, might we not enact *laws* also for the same purpose?'

'Of what kind?'

'We might bestow exemptions from taxation upon the best, especially in the matter of inheritances, taxing them lightly or not at all, while increasing the burden in proportion as the money passed into more and more unworthy hands.'

'You mean that a First Class man could claim an abatement from his Income Tax, and from Succession and Legacy duties?'

'Something of the sort, for there are ten

thousand ways of favouring the best. And you really must not expect me to be too precise about so trivial a point as this of money. For we could do much even with a little money, and even at the most not a tithe would be needed of the money you now spend on the support of congenital idiots and lunatics, hereditary criminals and incorrigible idlers. And none of these would be found in the best State. Then, again, consider the money you now spend on doctors and the working time you lose by illness. Is not this loss largely due to the fact that you are weaklings, bred from a diseased stock that ought not to have been preserved? You remember how even in the *Republic* I pointed out that the degeneracy of the State dated from a neglect of the right methods of breeding? Whereas in the Best State the doctors will be concerned rather with preserving the health of the sound than with ministering to the diseases of the unsound and prolonging the agonies of their miserable existence?'

'Would you then propose to put to death all such, I mean idiots, and sick persons and criminals?'

'That is hardly necessary: for *one* generation our State could endure them. What is necessary, therefore, is only that such persons should not be permitted to have offspring.'

'You would shut them up then in hospitals and prisons?'

'That would be an expensive method of dealing with them. And as regards criminals, nothing is more apt to make them worse than to shut them up with others of the same sort. But have you not a license which must be obtained by all who desire to marry?'

'Yes; it is cheap and any one, or rather any two, can obtain it.'

'Would it not be well then to make this marriage license a reality and to refuse it to all such as were considered likely to leave undesirable offspring, punishing them with appropriate severity in case they acted contrary to your injunctions?'

'Yes, that would be excellent; we should add to the Civil Service a Marriage Service examination and not omit the medical inspection either.'

'And in the case of others also we might inscribe on the license how many children they were worthy to have, putting no limit, however, on the marriages of the best.'

'By all means, Plato.'

'And that also would be the readiest means of regulating the population, and far superior to the things which go on now and of which you would not like me to speak, and I do not like even to think.'

'You are right and I thank you for refraining from shocking me. Nevertheless I doubt whether strictness in granting marriage licenses would suffice.'

'If it does not, our doctors will doubtless devise other means.'

'Are you thinking of what one of our Oxonian philosophers has called "social surgery"?'

'Bradley's phrase is a delicate one, and as I promised not to shock you and you have yourself mentioned it, we cannot do better than adopt it.'

'It seems to me, Plato, that you are ready to go very far.'

'As far as is necessary, for the sake of the true Aristocracy.'

'And do you truly think that in this way we shall reach it?'

'Can you doubt it? Have we not devised a scheme whereby all, or nearly all, shall be inspired with a desire to make the best of themselves, whereby the worst are ever sterilized and the better rendered more fruitful than the inferior, and in which the honours and rank of every citizen will, either from the first or after a short interval, correspond with his own intrinsic worth?'

'But do you not fear lest the unfit, being many, should band themselves together, and abrogate the laws of the best State?'

'No, for they would *not* be many. In each generation only a few, whose all-round unfitness admitted of no dispute, would be dealt with according to the laws.'

'In that case do you not pity the unfit, whom you propose to weed out so ruthlessly?'

'I pity them more than those who permit them to prolong their misery in their descendants, and allow them to be a curse to themselves and others. I would do everything for them, except allow them to rear children whose life will not be worth the living.'

'It seems to me, Plato, that you are really serious in your present proposals, and that if so they are likely some day to prove serious also for others.'

'The tongue is loosed, but the spirit is not tied.'

'That sounds like Euripides. Tell me plainly that I may not be wasting my enthusiasm on a dream. Are you in earnest or not?'

'What an absurd pedant you are! Here you are asking me the same question which you said in the beginning your pupils were always asking. I rebuked you then.'

'Rebuke, but tell me.'

'If you insist, I will answer your question, if you will first amend its statement.'

'Surely it was plain enough, nor can I see what loophole it left to enable you to escape answering *yes* or *no*. For were not the alternatives contradictory?'

'Perhaps not.'

'What do you mean?'

'I mean that you must not bully me like

Thrasymachus, and that there may be a third alternative.'

'To your being serious or not? I do not see how that is logically possible.'

'You forget, my friend, that I lived before Aristotle had invented logic, and need not bind myself by his wretched rules. And even by the strictest rules, may we not say that everything is either A or not A, *or both or neither*?'

'I suppose we may, but how will it help you here?'

'I propose to sum up the two alternatives you omitted in one word, and if you are wise you will agree with me.'

'A winged word forsooth.'

'Well, listen—I am, and ever have been, what no one has a better right to be, to wit, *academic*.'

'That is harder than any oracle! And do you think that you will thus escape censure?'

'Perhaps not; but I shall soar above it.'

'I wonder how you would fare among our British Philistines.'

'Why should I fare ill, seeing that, both for other reasons and to please you, I have been conservative, wonderfully how, and have proposed nothing revolutionary, confining myself to gently turning to the light the eyes of the cave-dwellers whom you mention?'

'You do not know how they abhor the light.'

'Yet I am but preaching to them the necessity of self-development.'

'Maybe, but your language sounds unfamiliar.'

'Then repeat it, until it sounds familiar!'

'How splendidly you must have taught, Plato! I hardly dare, however, to follow your advice. However mildly they were put, your proposals would shock the British Public.'

'And yet the much more revolutionary and unsparing proposals of the *Republic* command, you tell me, universal admiration, and are held to be salutary in the education of youth!'

'Ah, but then they are protected by the decent obscurity of a learned language!'

'Surely your language is learned enough, and by the time they have passed through your mind my ideas will be obscure enough to make them decent and safe.'

'Well, Plato, I will see what I can do, some day, if I too may be "academic". But tell me next how you would order the institutions of your aristocracy in detail.'

'I would leave that to the best rulers of the best State, better men and fitter, you may be sure, than you or I. And having once got a State permeated through and through with the principle that the Best must rule, and rule for the best, it matters little what methods they will from time to time judge best. We can

trust them and have no need to prolong the argument.'

'Nevertheless, Plato, there is one more doubt which I hope you will permit me to mention. It is so fundamental that I almost fear your scheme is more beautiful than possible.'

'Do not delay to state it.'

'We have assumed, Plato, that most of the evils of society could be cured, if instead of allowing Natural Selection to butcher us blindly and unchecked, or worse still, letting Social Selection counteract Natural Selection and endanger the future of the race, we can consciously select ourselves with a view to the best.'

'That is true.'

'Very well, then; it follows that we must have a right opinion of the end we esteem best and with a view to which we select ourselves.'

'We must.'

'What now will happen if our conception of the End is a wrong one?'

'We shall select, I suppose, with a view to the impossible or undesirable.'

'And will not that be a terrible calamity?'

'Unless, indeed, experience teaches us to modify our first ideas.'

'But will it be possible to retrace our steps?'

'It will be hard, and it would be best to start with a right conception of the End.'

'But shall we not be compelled to start from the vulgar conception of the best man and the best life, entertained by the Many?'

'Unless we take counsel of the wisest.'

'But even if that were likely to occur, they could scarcely prevail against the current notions in the long run. And so public opinion might bring it about that a popular cricketer received a First Class certificate and a philosopher like you a Fourth. Hence it is, oh Plato, that I am terribly afraid that our first attempts to select ourselves, and to guide the course of our own development, will prove grievous failures and end only in the apotheosis of the vulgar and banausic.'

'It may be that you are right. But sooner or later, with the care and thought which would be for the first time bestowed upon such matters, the right course would become apparent and would be adopted.

'I fear, however, Plato, that your newest Republic is not one for the twentieth century, but constructed to be many centuries ahead of the present age.'

'What if it is? Why should that distress me? Why should a philosopher care *when* his ideas are carried into fulfilment? And what, after all, are a hundred years, or even a thousand years, compared with the whole of history? I am content, therefore, to foresee that sooner or later mankind must take itself

in hand and, emancipating itself from Natural Selection, must consciously select itself with a view to the Good, thereby co-operating with and assisting, instead of thwarting, the god who has hitherto guided the history of the world.'

'Of what god are you speaking?'

'That, my friend, is another story, which I cannot relate to you now. For I see two reasons why I must leave you.'

'That is grievous news indeed: can you not tell me what they are?'

'First of all there is a reception to-day of new Ideas by the Idea of the Good. And it is my duty to present some of the ideas we have just now evolved for approval and recognition in the World of Pure Thought, and for initiation into the society of the other Forms that are subject to the Idea of the Good.'

'You speak of a most interesting ceremony at which I would give much to be present.'

'That, alas, is impossible, for you are not yet fitted to behold Forms in their nudity, still less could the ineffable splendour of the Idea of the Good become apparent to you. You would see nothing.'

'What then is your second reason for leaving me so soon?'

'That you can see for yourself. Behold there on the left a little cloud of dust. It is a motley mob of false social reformers who have

been attracted by our discourse. They are rushing eagerly to meet you and to recommend their several nostrums. I am sorry for you, for you cannot escape them. That is the penalty of your rashness. But me they cannot reach. Farewell, and remember me to your Boards of Faculty.'

So saying, he rose gently from the ground and was wafted upwards, growing brighter as he ascended, until he seemed but a shining speck of light in the translucent ether and was merged in that great Sun which bestows visibility upon all things seen and knowability upon all things known.

My eyes had hardly ceased from trying to follow him, when my attention was recalled to earth by a tumultuous crowd which surrounded me with shouts and violent gesticulations. The false reformers were not an attractive spectacle. They seemed an ugly, petty horde of Yahoos, without dignity or distinction, dirty and dusty and malodorous, as though they had come a long journey from some remote cesspool in which they had been wallowing. I shuddered and was silent, looking in vain for any familiar face. But at first I could see none; it was evident that merciful oblivion had for the most part overtaken them. At last, however, I recognized two of the chief among them, distinguished only by their greater noisiness and ribaldry, as Thersites and Jean Jacques

Rousseau. They spoke to me alternately and together, but what they said I hardly heard, and have forgotten. For soon a weariness crept over my soul, and my consciousness withdrew, and the voices grew fainter and, like the buzzing of a departing mosquito, died away.

In the morning I was awakened in the usual way in my usual bed, and got up, and dressed, as if nothing had happened. Whether anything had, is a question I must leave to those who are capable of forming an opinion on such matters.

VI

THE RUIN OF ROME AND ITS LESSONS FOR US[1]

When our President announced to me last July that I had been chosen to deliver the Galton Lecture for this year and suggested the subject it was desired that I should treat, my first impulse was to plead utter unworthiness. For, much as I appreciated the honour the Society has conferred upon me, how could I, a mere philosopher, venture upon a subject so vast, thorny, and difficult, which had engaged the attention, and baffled the learning, of a multitude of historians, and among them some of the greatest and best? However, our President would take no denial, and I therefore trust that you will pardon my temerity and hold him, and not me, responsible for any inadequacy or failure you may detect in my remarks in approaching so great a subject. I can only hope that, if I guide myself by the

[1] Galton Memorial Lecture delivered before the Eugenics Education Society on February 16, 1925, and published in the *Eugenics Review* for April 1925.

researches of the great historians who have attacked the problem, I shall not fail completely.

I

On reflecting on my task the first point that seemed distinctly to emerge was that possibly, in some minor respects, an ignorant but open-minded philosopher might have an advantage over a learned historian. For the latter is always in danger of failing to see the wood for the trees, and apt to be reluctant to generalize freely from evidence of which he feels too keenly the complexity, inadequacy, and redundancy. He is, moreover, apt to be hampered by his natural respect for his authorities and to demand explicit documentary support for his interpretations, in the absence of which he simply declares the problem insoluble by historical methods. Hence a merely ingenious and alluring theory such as that large tracts of fertile land became uninhabitable in the ancient world so soon as its mosquito population became infected with the malaria germ, probable as it is, will make little impression on him because, naturally enough, no ancient evidence can be quoted in its favour. The philosopher, on the other hand, is permitted much greater audacity in generalizing, and if he is open-minded, as he by no means always is, may show much greater willingness to draw his evidence from every

source. Nor will he be daunted by the difficulty of his task; for to talk about insoluble problems is part of his profession.

Accordingly one need not despair of gleanings, even when following in the footsteps of giants like Gibbon and Otto Seeck, who spent their life in the study of the most conspicuous case of a declining civilization, and produced the masterpieces entitled *The Decline and Fall of Rome* and *Der Untergang der antiken Welt.* To be candid, neither of these great works seems to have completely solved the problem of explaining why the Roman Empire fell, though both drew admirable pictures of its protracted agony.

II

To Gibbon[1] the main reasons for the fall of Rome were military disorders and the rise of Christianity; but his adroit insinuations against the latter fall far short of proofs. Whatever the truth may have been about the communism and pacifism of the Apostolic Age, it seems clear that in the second and third centuries the Christian Church had ceased to be the socially subversive institution that might be deduced from a literal construction of the Gospel precepts. If it is true that the Christians did not provide an adequate quota for the army, the reasons may well have been that

[1] Cf. *Decline and Fall*, ch. xxxviii., s.f.

the compulsory participation in heathen sacrifices, and in the dirty work the Roman emperors expected of their soldiery, must have been distasteful to men animated by Christian (or indeed any sort of) moral feeling. But it is a very obvious explanation of the fact, if fact it was, that the strength of Christianity lay in city populations which had become unwarlike long ago. Lastly, the fact itself may be doubted; for it is hardly credible that a military chief like Constantine could have imposed Christianity on his Empire, if his army had not been largely favourable to the new religion. And that the Christians, an aggressive proselytizing sect, were devoid of pugnacity, is equally incredible; at any rate the proceedings of the Œcumenical Councils of the fourth and fifth centuries do not suggest that a lack of fighting spirit was the besetting sin of Christian priests and prelates.

In any case the rise of Christianity cannot have been the real cause of the decline of Rome; it was at most a *symptom*, one form taken by a general movement away from the haughty, complacent, and heartless rituals of classical paganism towards a type of religion that had more sympathy and consolation to offer to the human heart. If Christianity had not satisfied men's religious cravings, some other Oriental religion with similar qualities would have prevailed, Mithraism, Manichæism, or perhaps

even Buddhism. Lastly, a State which, like the Roman Empire, does not impose conscription to fill the ranks of its army, but relies on voluntary enlistment, can hardly complain if any class of its citizens refuse to enter the army, and become unwarlike.

III

Otto Seeck investigates the problem of the collapse of ancient civilization much more elaborately than Gibbon, and arrives at a long array of causes which, he holds, contributed to the result. They differ a good deal in weight and importance, and are not perhaps in all cases quite consistent with each other; but they are all deserving of attentive consideration.

I would enumerate them as follows: (1) the process which he calls the *extirpation of the best* and illustrates by the story in Herodotus [1] of the inquiry addressed by Periander the tyrant of Corinth to his friend Thrasybulus, tyrant of Miletus, as to how he should maintain his power. The messenger received no answer in words, but related how Thrasybulus had walked about his garden and kept on cutting off with his stick the heads of the tallest poppies. Thus the extirpation of the best began with the slaughter and exile of prominent citizens by tyrants and democracies in the Greek city-

[1] v. 92. Cf. iii. 48.

states, and with the maxim of ancient statecraft that 'a fool is he who having killed the father spares the son'; it was continued by the proscriptions in the Roman civil wars, and the judicial murders of the nobility by the Emperors, and completed in the Byzantinized court by the suppression of any one showing any symptom of courage and independence.

(2) The same process was, Seeck holds, carried on by the continuous warfare whereby Rome conquered the world. This first ruined the Italian farmer when it took him away from his land for long periods,[1] and then when Marius, recognizing the facts, substituted an enlisted professional army for the conscript citizen levies, rapidly selected for extinction the boldest and most vigorous elements in the population. By the time of Trajan Italy had become incapable of furnishing the annual contingent of 700 recruits for the Prætorian Guard.

The Emperors aggravated the dysgenic effects of warfare by forbidding their Roman soldiers to marry until they were pensioned off as 'veterans'; with the result that they only produced bastards with the inferior (and largely barbarian) women who haunted the frontier camps.[2] The barbarian 'auxiliaries', on the other hand, who were largely raised by con-

[1] Seeck, i. pp. 240, 261, 263.
[2] *Ibid.* p. 265.

scription, were *not* forbidden to marry, and naturally multiplied until the legionaries also had to be taken from the more or less Romanized barbarians. When, under Septimius Severus, the Roman soldier was allowed to marry, it was too late ; the mass of the population had become utterly unwarlike, and the soldiers could only form a relatively minute caste, the human output of which could easily be exhausted by a few of the murderous civil wars waged between the rival pretenders to the imperial purple. And then again, the losses could only be made good by recruiting barbarians.

(3) To depopulation Seeck assigns a much less prominent place in the downfall of Rome and Greece than those historians who have allowed themselves to be moved by ancient laments over the emptiness of Greece and the desolation of the Campagna. Rightly, it seems to me ; for writers like Plutarch, noticing how small and unimportant had become the Greek cities that had once been great and populous, and not knowing whither their population had gone, inferred it was extinct, whereas in fact it had availed itself of the *pax Romana* to diffuse itself all over the Empire, and, in a businesslike way, had colonized richer regions, in which it was easier to earn an ampler livelihood. There is reason to believe, moreover, that the Greek world from the eighth century

B.C. to the fourth was greatly *over*-populated; then Alexander overthrew Persia, and delivered the East to Greek exploitation. The resulting rush, though it represents the greatest era of Greek colonization, has hardly been noticed by modern historians, because it does not happen to have been described by ancient; but the Greeks remained in Asia, until Mr. Lloyd George's ill-judged incitement of Venizelos ended in disaster a couple of years ago. As for the Campagna, Mr. W. H. S. Jones's mosquito-theory seems to be fully adequate to account for its desolation.

Seeck, however, though he does not believe in general depopulation, admits it locally, and draws attention to the ravages of the great plague in the reign of Marcus Aurelius, and thinks it may have been as devastating as the Black Death, which carried off from a third to a half of the European population in the fourteenth century. As a consequence, redundant barbarian populations were admitted into the Empire, and settled as colonists in the Danubian frontier districts—the beginning of a dubious policy which altered the racial composition of the population, though it invigorated its blood. Seeck points out that after this settlement depopulation ceases, the difficulty of recruiting diminishes, and the army becomes barbarian in blood.

(4) Of this infiltration of rapidly multiplying

neighbours into a sparsely occupied region with a stationary population the Roman Empire is, of course, a palmary example. It may be studied also in modern France, which is constantly attracting Spaniards, Italians, Swiss, Poles, Germans (by no means all Alsatians), and Belgians across its borders. Provided, however, the foreigners do not pour in too rapidly, and do not differ too widely from the native population, this sort of influx does no harm, but rather the reverse, since the immigrants will *wish* to be assimilated, and must be above the average in ability and enterprise to make good in a foreign land. In this respect immigration is preferable to the otherwise similar process of *internal selection* which is silently going on within every country inhabited by different racial strains with different rates of reproduction ; for then it is usually the inferior types which gain upon the better. At any rate in the case of Rome there is as little proof as in that of France that the process is a serious cause of decadence ; the barbarians were only too anxious to adopt Roman civilization, and being nearly all Nordics, were quite as good stuff as the original Romans themselves.

(5) Far more importance attaches to a number of defects in the social organization of the Roman Empire, proceeding partly from economic ignorance, partly from the causes which everywhere tempt to misrule, partly from

pride in past achievement and consequent conceit. The imperial administration of the ancient world may at first have been a great improvement on the republican ; but in course of time it developed into gross, and indeed intolerable, misgovernment. Perhaps the chief among the causes of this misgovernment was ignorance of economic law, which was as crass, though more pardonable, among Roman Emperors as it is among modern politicians. The tricks they played, *e.g.* in interfering with the course of trade and in debasing the coinage, were more violent, though less effective, than the expedients of modern governments. They had a knack of decreeing economic impossibilities, such as preserving the parity between good money and bad, and enforcing it by capital punishment, and ' maximum prices ' were sustained by similar sanctions. The blood shed by such martyrs to the integrity of economic law must have far exceeded in volume that spilt for the truths of Christianity. Only it was shed in vain, for no amount of adverse experience seems capable of convincing mankind that economic law can no more be overruled than the law of gravitation.

To the evil consequences of economic ignorance must be added (6) those of an atrocious system of taxation, which first beggared the taxpayer, and then made his occupation hereditary in order that he might not become free,

even as a beggar, and habitually extracted arrears of taxes by torture, and (7) a corrupt, excessive, and ever-growing bureaucracy, which, with the army, devoured more and more of the public income.

Seeck mentions also (8) an excessive respect for antiquity, and (9), probably in consequence thereof, a curious loss of inventiveness and of the wish to progress. (10) The final result was an utter and universal servility pervading all classes, though on his own showing bishops like Ambrose of Milan and Cyril of Alexandria could hardly be accused of this failing.

IV

Now it is evident that this impressive list of causes of decay, acting singly or in unison, could reduce any society to a very low ebb. Still they do not seem to explain quite everything. They do not explain why the decay continued without a recovery, and with hardly an arrest, for over 500 years. Nor perhaps do they fully explain the decay itself. For after all most of these causes of decay may be seen operating elsewhere, without leading to a complete collapse. In China, for example, they have merely produced a stationary civilization. Why should not Rome have remained stationary like China, which has always tamed and absorbed her barbarian conquerors ? The only

vital difference I can see in the two cases is that for 3000 years China, irrespective of the quarrels of her dynasts, recruited her administrators by a competitive Civil Service Examination in the classics, and that this somehow picked out the best brains.

Apart from this some of Seeck's causes of decay call for a little comment. In the first place his notion of the Extirpation of the Best needs a little more analysis. He does not explain *by what standard* those 'extirpated' are the 'best'. They may be 'best' (*a*) in the eyes of their contemporaries, (*b*) in the judgment of the historian's subsequent age, which believes itself to be a better judge of goodness, or (*c*) as judged by an absolute standard of value. The third of these senses can no doubt be dismissed by the reflection that it would only become available at the end of moral progress, when absolute and final perfection had been reached. But the other two should be distinguished. For the elimination of those mistakenly considered best by a corrupt society need not by any means be an unmitigated evil in the interests of human progress. Nor is it impossible that the historian's judgment may be wrong, even though, like the rest of us, he is sure to believe he is right. However, if we can assume the continuity of moral progress, it will follow that the judgment of each later age, though never

infallible nor absolutely right, is at least better than that of every earlier age.

It should be noticed further that in any imperfect society there must exist a discrepancy between the qualities judged ideally best and those which are conducive to survival and success in life under the actual conditions. As, therefore, the 'best' will not coincide with the fittest to survive, a certain elimination of the best must always be going on and give rise to complaints that the wicked flourish and the righteous are worsted in the struggle for existence. But this process need not do much harm. It need not prevent a growing convergence of the fittest and the best. Hence the mere discovery of a social process which may be described as in a sense an extirpation of the best is not enough to prove that a society is decaying. Actually, moreover, Seeck's use of the conception proves too much. He dates back the extirpation of the best so far that it applies to the great age of Greece, and he forgets that the extirpation of those conventionally reputed best may sometimes be a beneficial process. For there is needed also a social process which clears away the debris of corrupt aristocracies which have grown effete and inefficient. That affords a sort of justification for revolutions like the French and the Russian.

Even apart from revolutions and the bloodthirstiness of tyrants, it is probable enough

that throughout antiquity the upper classes were continually dying out, as is indicated by the growing rarity of the Roman patricians in spite of repeated creations of fresh ones by the Emperors.

But this is a universal phenomenon of all civilizations, though a few families persist. The Princes Massimo still claim descent from the Fabii Maximi, as is illustrated by the famous reply of the Prince of the time to Napoleon's insolent inquiry whether this descent was genuine—" I do not know, Sire ; but the world has believed it for a thousand years ". No doubt also the decay of ancient aristocracies was accelerated by their slave-holding habits ; for slavery is a subtle social poison most deadly to the master class.

On the other hand it should be remembered what a very small portion of the population the aristocracy formed in ancient times, and how difficult it was for ability to rise in a very rigid social order ; there must have been considerable amounts of it which were never extirpated, because they could not rise to the regions where extirpation was rampant. Finally, allowance must be made for the fact that social standards in antiquity were so perverse and mistaken that extirpation of the reputed best might well fail to be an adequate cause of social decay.

V

Seeck's second cause, persistent warfare, is undoubtedly a *vera causa*. It may with some confidence be assigned as the chief cause of the downfall of Athens, as of the decline of Portugal and Spain. For in each of these cases a relatively small population was exposed to a severe and long-continued draining away to distant wars of its most vigorous and energetic personnel. The Athenians of the fifth century B.C. frittered away in futile and biologically expensive wars the human capital which they had accumulated under the wise rule of the Pisistratids, whose pacific policy must be credited with most of the great Athenians, who were born in their time, and 'fought at Marathon' with very little loss to themselves. Portugal and Spain had not men enough to control and colonize their vast possessions in the New World and the East without irretrievably impoverishing their home stock, and the Spaniards in addition made the same mistake as the French subsequently, that of trying simultaneously to colonize the New World, and to dominate Europe.

But it seems very doubtful whether the Roman Empire was a similar case. Its area and population were far too large to be exhausted in this way, and for the first 200 years of its existence it only waged a very moderate

number of wars—far fewer than those the Republic had indulged in.

It seems preferable therefore to connect the growing decline in the military efficiency of the Roman population with a phenomenon which is quite general in ancient civilizations. Civilization in antiquity seems for some obscure reason to have been highly toxic to the military virtues. We find that everywhere, no sooner does a conquering tribe become civilized, than it ceases to be formidable in war; and so though civilized states were frequently overrun by barbarian conquerors, their rule was usually short-lived. The history of Babylonia, Egypt, India, China, Lydia, Persia, Gaul, is full of examples. The ancients used to attribute this phenomenon to the growth of an enervating 'luxury' which departed from the good old simple and hardy manners of ancestral conquerors, and it was probably the reason why special warrior-castes were formed in so many ancient States (Egypt, Babylonia, India, Japan, and probably Assyria) to preserve, at least in part of the population, the military qualities which had once been general. In the Roman Empire also its formation can clearly be traced. But the notion that Civilization, intrinsically and simply as such, was necessarily fatal to the fighting spirit is surely refuted by this very history of Rome. *Rome's* barbarian conquerors were somehow *not* enervated by luxury, but

went on fighting after they got civilized, as gaily, if not quite as ferociously, as ever. The fighting of the Middle Ages is perhaps best regarded as a sort of sport of the nobility and gentry, in the pursuit of which these classes not infrequently extirpated themselves by their excessive zeal; yet the military qualities did not become extinct, and whenever the working classes were admitted to the privilege of shedding their blood on behalf of the various causes alleged at various times to be worth fighting for, they were found to supply cannon-fodder of undiminished excellence. Nor can it even be said that the 'Capuan luxury' of great cities deprives men of their pugnacity; for in the late war it was found that townsmen made quite as good soldiers as peasants. One may perhaps suggest that mediæval society had devised a method of sterilizing the more pacific portions of the population by clerical celibacy, and that in modern society many of its sports and games train up a certain taste for daring and danger, which develops into military courage when the occasion arises: but the phenomenon remains a puzzling one, and is deserving of further study.

Lastly, it should not be overlooked that ancient warfare was much less dysgenic than modern. For not only had the brave and strong better chances of surviving both the actual fighting and the hardships and diseases

of war, but the warrior class as a whole usually suffered less than the civil population swept away by famine and disease. Thus, if in the next war the front will be a region of relative security, and the decisive factor will be the wholesale massacre of civil populations from the air, as many believe, this will be a reversion to the former effects of warfare.

VI

(3) Depopulation is a subject on which vast amounts of nonsense are habitually talked by excited people who clamour for quantity without regard to quality, and do not trouble to distinguish between a stationary and a declining population. But it is quite untrue that any existing state, even France, has normally a declining population, and it is likely that the ancient lamentations about depopulation were equally hysterical.

For, when one considers the enormous potential fertility man shares with the other animals, and the rapidity with which accidental depletions can be made good, it is hard to resist the conviction that under normal conditions it is a biological certainty that there can be no *lasting* depopulation. On the contrary, the world, even though it may not be actually *over*-populated, must always be as *fully* populated as the available food and social conditions permit.

It follows (1) that in normal times, when no additions are being made to the sources of food-supply, human population must be as stationary as animal life, and (2) that there must therefore always be operative in every human society checks on its potential fertility sufficient to leave its numbers stationary. These checks are very various in character, but as Professor Carr Saunders has fully shown,[1] they always exist. History as a whole confirms these deductions, but their consequences have been masked by the fact that the human race has on the whole been progressive, and has used the best part of its intelligence to increase its food-supply, thus enabling its numbers to increase, though not usually with the unprecedented rapidity conditioned by the development of Science in the last century.

Conversely, if the normal equilibrium of a society is suddenly assailed by a new danger, a war, a convulsion of nature, a pestilence, the introduction of a new poison, vice, or disease, population naturally diminishes. But only for a time. For all these agencies of destruction are more or less selective, and after they have swept away the more susceptible, the survivors will grow more resistant; thus there will grow up some measure of natural immunity to the ravages of any disease or vice.

All this must apply to the Roman Empire,

[1] *The Population Problem.*

as to any other society, say a South Sea island which has the misfortune to be discovered by Europeans, and is consequently flooded with vile liquor, compelled to clothe itself in cotton goods, and infected with measles, influenza, syphilis, and other hitherto unknown diseases. The island savages, whose native checks on population continue to act, will rapidly melt away, and may almost die out, of disgust and discouragement (except the half-breeds); but if the change in their habits of life is not too sudden and radical, and unaccompanied by violence, a remnant will survive, and will presently begin to multiply again. This has happened to the New Zealand Maoris, the American Indians—a hunting population whose food-supply was destroyed by the firearms of the European invaders—and some of the Pacific islanders. It will probably happen to the Australian aborigines, if they are not hunted down like the Tasmanians and the Beothacks of Newfoundland. So with Rome. It is likely enough that large tracts of the Empire were rendered uninhabitable by the introduction of malaria, and enervating by that of *Anchylostoma duodenale*, the 'hook worm', and that the cities with their slums and vices had to recruit themselves from without, though it was precisely in the cities of the Roman Empire that the Jews learnt to survive, and to adapt themselves to slum life to an extent only surpassed

by the Chinese; but that depopulation went on continuously for 500 years is too improbable to be rendered credible by the extant evidence.

(4) Concerning the effects of barbarian colonization little need be added to Seeck. He himself thinks that it arrested depopulation, and it ought therefore to have figured as a cause, not of decay, but of rejuvenation.

VII

(5) When we pass from the quasi-biological to the social and economic causes of decay, we get on to firmer ground. There can be no doubt that they are adequate. No society, whatever its other excellences, can flourish if its economic basis is not sound, and if it sets itself to defy economic law. A tribe of geniuses could not maintain civilization, if its conditions were such that every one had to labour all day for a bare living. A tribe of robbers cannot grow really rich by robbery alone, though man's predatory instincts are slow to recognize this law of nature. Needless to say the ancients did not. With the exception of China, their empires were all, more or less, robber states, that tried to live upon slaves and tributes, and suffered accordingly. For the thing cannot be done without disastrously disorganizing the economy of those who try it, as our political wisdom is, very tardily,

beginning to recognize. That is the essence of the ' reparations problem '.

How deleterious bad economics may become is vividly illustrated by a pleasing anecdote Suetonius [1] tells about the Emperor Vespasian. When he was rebuilding the Capitol (burnt in the civil war) a mechanical inventor offered him a machine for moving large columns cheaply. The Emperor refused it, because he would not deprive the poor of their work ! Nowadays an emperor would not perhaps argue thus, but trade-unionists would, and they are more powerful than emperors.

Bad economics, bad taxes, and bad bureaucracies we seem to have with us always, like the poor, who are their end-product. But in ancient times no remedies were known for these evils. Nowadays cures for them are known, but it is not easy to mobilize the knowledge. For it is not known to the people, nor to the politicians. It is the well-guarded secret of a professorial class which is induced, and indeed compelled, by our systems of academic organization to express itself, either not at all, or only in such technical terms as not to divulge it.

Still more subtle are the causes of decay lurking in extreme respect for antiquity and spiritual conservatism. It is evident, of course, that primarily and in itself this sentiment is

[1] Vespasian, ch. xviii.

a beneficial cause of social stability. But if it is overdone, it becomes an insuperable bar to improvement. And it is precisely the societies which can look back upon great and glorious achievements in the past which most easily succumb to this temptation. They become self-satisfied and insufferably conceited, and will not listen to any suggestion of reform. It must have been to this spirit that was due the amazing fact recorded by Seeck that for 500 years no improvement was introduced into the arms and equipment of the Roman armies.[1] For the science of killing has been, on the whole, the most continuously progressive of human activities, and even throughout the Middle Ages, the armourer's art was steadily improving the quality of the weapons and the armour.

It is to the conceit of a civilization proud to excess of its past, rather than to any intrinsic sterility of the human spirit, that we should ascribe the lack of inventions which characterizes the decay of antiquity. The originality which invents novelties is always scarce, and the way of the inventor is everywhere hard; but it is not usually cut short with the prompt brutality displayed by Tiberius when an inventor came to show him a wonderful glass vessel which could be bent without breaking and then restored to its former shape. The Emperor asked him whether any one else knew

[1] Seeck, i. p. 270.

his secret, and when he said no, ordered his head to be cut off, in order that his invention might not cause a slump in the value of metal vessels. Petronius, that most modern of Latin writers, puts the tale into the mouth of his *nouveau riche*, Trimalchio,[1] and his modernity is attested by the similar fate which befell the invention of 'toughened' glass in modern times. Only the glass manufacturers suppressed the invention, not by decapitating the inventor, but by buying up his patent.

Despite such *contretemps*, we may extract from this anecdote the essential difference between ancient and modern civilization. The ancients did not believe in progress, and did not want to progress: we do both. And, to some extent and in some respects, we do manage to achieve progress, however slowly and imperfectly. This is almost the only encouraging feature about our condition, though our progress remains superficial and precarious, and may easily go under in one of the various social convulsions with which we are threatened.

VIII

If this explanation of the causes of deterioration in the Roman Empire still seems inadequate to yield '*the*' cause thereof—and it does not seem so to me—the inquirer should

[1] *Conviv. Trim.*, 51.

be asked to reconsider an important presupposition. He may have assumed that such things as ' decay ' and ' progress ' are unitary social entities, to which one or more ' causes ' can be assigned. But this is a mistake. They are both *resultants*, end-products of an infinitely complex interplay of social forces, and embody our value-judgments on their outcome. Consequently it is entirely possible that ' progress ' and ' decay ' may be going on simultaneously in different parts or respects of the social organism, and that a tendency which ' caused ' progress hitherto may presently become a ' cause ' of decay. The social philosopher can analyse out the various tendencies, and study their interaction in a given society ; but he is often unable to predict whether the society in which they operate will as a whole be progressive or decadent. Hence he should be willing to accept the lessons of history as to their adequacy, when it informs him that the society in question did in fact decay.

Similarly, it is simply a fact which we have to accept from history, that there has been biological ' evolution ' in a certain direction, and that the qualities of the human material and the character of the social institutions from which modern civilization started, have sufficed to keep it ' progressive ' up to date.

IX

Finally, what about the lessons for us of the downfall of ancient civilization ? It is obvious that many of them are pretty plain and pungent. Nearly all the causes of the decay of antiquity are still in full operation to-day, and some have been aggravated. For example, we have adopted the principle of the Dole, and doles of all sorts, for all sorts of purposes, are rapidly being established. Is there any reason to believe that their effects will differ from those of the Roman Corn-Dole ? Will they not drain the State of its economic strength, while demoralizing their recipients, all the more rapidly because they form a larger percentage of the total population ? Again, the pernicious contra-selection of the biologically less fit, which has so far attended all civilizations, is a much greater menace now. For whereas it did not seem feasible to regard as an irreparable loss the destruction of the Roman nobility, so long as an at least equally competent ruling class could be drawn from the Nordic ' barbarians ', and this class was in any case too small for its destruction to involve any great deterioration in the race, the situation now is very different. We can see no source of rejuvenation either within or without. Declining civilization is no longer surrounded by an ocean of vigorous, untamed, and unspent barbarism,

into which it can take a tonic plunge. *All* the social strata in which ability may reasonably be expected to be generated are diminishing in number, and modern civilizations are recruiting themselves from the feeble-minded and the casual labourers, who are really unemployables for some reason or other.

Still there are grounds for hope. In the first place we know much more than the ancients, and understand what we must do to avoid destruction. It does not follow, of course, that we shall be willing to apply our knowledge intelligently, or to scrap the institutions, like war, which are menacing our future. But we already know enough to justify the prediction that if modern civilization perishes, it will be *felo de se*. Secondly, we have an adequate motive for avoiding suicide. We mostly desire to improve, and believe that improvement is possible. Of course this faith and desire is not enough to produce improvement automatically; we must *act* upon it, and that resolutely and right soon.

To that end the first step will have to be to approach the existing political organizations, and to impress on them that their programmes all ignore the gravest causes of social decay. It will not be easy to get them to listen to reason, for they all have prejudices unfavourable to eugenics. The Conservatives may be supposed to have most natural sympathy with

the aim of arresting the elimination of the best; but they are no longer the aristocrats they were, and the party is falling more and more under the influence of industrial potentates greatly interested in promoting the abundance of cheap labour. Also it cannot be denied that the idea of eugenics is new, and therefore suspect. The Liberals, on the other hand, though not hostile to change as such, are not specially favourable to science, and are tainted with a false humanitarianism which aggravates, and does not cure, social maladjustments; while the Labour Party, though it ought to be the most reluctant to work for the support of wastrels and parasites, has unfortunately got into the way of regarding limitation of output as a legitimate way of raising the social value of any product. We may therefore find ourselves preaching to deaf ears all round, in which case there is nothing for it but to scrap them all, and to found a new party of eugenical reform.

VII

SOME MISCONCEPTIONS OF EUGENICS

THE purpose of this essay is to examine half-a-dozen objections which are frequently urged against eugenics, and to remove the misconceptions underlying them. They object to the programme of the eugenists that it is (1) revolutionary and utopian; (2) unscientific, because scientists are not agreed about what should be done; (3) impracticable, because we have neither enough knowledge to experiment nor enough power to enact; (4) probably harmful rather than beneficial to the human race, because fatal to genius, which is for the most part either physically feeble or akin to insanity; (5) tyrannical, because it would involve an intolerable amount of coercion, and (6) would be utterly destructive of love and individual liberty of choice in the most intimate personal relations.

I

For the idea that eugenical doctrine is fantastic and necessarily revolutionary Plato must be held responsible. For Plato was the first

eugenist, as he was the first communist and the first feminist. But this great thinker was an intransigent revolutionary, who scorned everywhere, in metaphysics as in politics, to relate his ideals to the actual. Accordingly the fundamental flaw in all his political proposals is that he will never consider from what starting-point in the actual it is possible to build a road to the ideal. He has no conception of a process, of gradually working up to his ideal. He just postulates perfection, and arrives at the Kallipolis by a leap into the void. His actual recommendation for starting the Ideal State, for example, is simply grotesque. When by some divine stroke of luck a philosopher-king has been found, all the inhabitants above the age of ten are to be driven out of the city.[1] Who is to drive them, or what is to induce them to go, is not stated. We are left to suppose that the philosopher-king (or perhaps even Plato himself !) would undertake also the functions of a Universal Nursemaid ! Just so he postulates the perfecting of all knowledge by the discovery of the Idea of Good, as a necessary preliminary to the establishment of the Kallipolis, all of whose laws and institutions are to presuppose such perfect knowledge !

His eugenical proposals rest upon equally impossible presuppositions. He thinks the family must go, because it is a stronghold of selfishness

[1] *Republic*, vii. 541 A.

and faction, most deleterious to the unity of the State. He thinks it *can* be abolished and superseded by a system of public training, a public-school education, which would throw every child unaided on its own resources from the day of its birth, and force it to fight and intrigue incessantly for its own hand, in order to hold its own against its equals and to win the approval of its official superiors. He thinks that the business of propagation can be, and should be, divested of all sentiment, and that his Kallipolitans will contentedly mate with whatever partners the ' ingenious lots ' manipulated by his ' Guardians ' assign to them, no one ever noticing how invariably superiors were coupled with superiors and inferiors with inferiors, and no one discovering the truth but full-fledged guardians who have access to the stud-book. The crudity and impracticability of Plato's actual methods need only to be stated to be reprobated. As a practical politician Plato cannot be taken seriously.

Modern eugenists of a responsible kind have not fallen into these mistakes. From the first, Francis Galton, the creator of the name ' eugenics ', insisted that all eugenical reform must start from the actual state of human sentiment and must respect actual institutions. He disclaimed therefore all intention of revolutionary change. He had no desire to abolish the family, and wished only to improve it.

And he was perfectly right. It would be fatal to abolish the family. It is also quite unnecessary. For the family can render far more help to eugenics than any conceivable alternative. Parental devotion, family attachment, and pride of birth are among the strongest of existing sentiments; with any skill they could easily be turned into the strongest supports of eugenical ideas. Family pride would generate, and social sentiment would soon be taught to admire, a large and fine family of distinguished ancestry. And conversely family feeling could be trained to co-operate with social reprehension in the repression of wastrels in high life.

It cannot therefore be emphasized too strongly that human nature does not progress by leaps, but by the gradual transformation of its existing habits. A revolutionary procedure is psychologically impossible, and doomed to defeat. Modern eugenics therefore are conservative, recognize this, and propose to work within the framework of existing society. The evolution of eugenical sentiments, eugenical institutions, and eugenical men will be gradual and slow, perhaps too slow to save the human race; it will not be due to any *tour de force* of a Platonic superman.

II

Most scientists are wont to fight shy of shouldering the responsibility for the applica-

tion of their doctrines, and to deprecate scientific intervention in social affairs. They are disposed to assume this attitude also towards eugenics, and accordingly declare all eugenical action premature and unscientific. They plead that biology is nothing like advanced enough to lay down the principles of any eugenical order. Too many important theoretic questions in biology are unsettled and unsolved, and Darwinians, Lamarckians, Mendelians, etc., are still disputing about them : until they are finally decided by scientific authority, eugenists had better wait.

This attitude is of course very disconcerting for the eugenical enthusiast ; but it is not impossible for a critic to go behind it. He may ask the scientist whether he really expects the world to wait and to delay all action until the various schools of biologists have fought out their differences, and point out that they are almost entirely irrelevant to the practical problems of eugenics. For upon *any* biological theory it is an established fact that the hereditary constitution of a stock has an enormous bearing on the value of the individuals generated from it. And social institutions plainly ought to take account of this fact.

He may next ask the scientist whether he really means to assert that the practical man must wait for final truth, and remind him that final truth is not a scientific doctrine but the

dogma of an antiquated philosophy, which the practice of the sciences has confuted long ago. At any rate final truth is *never* attained in the sciences, if for no other reason, because, on principle, no science ever renounces the right of bettering any truth it has gained. If, therefore, this condition is insisted on, it means that action is to be put off for ever; which is *not* the way scientific knowledge is treated elsewhere. Thus the true inwardness of the demand for a complete consensus of scientific experts, delivered with absolute finality, is that it burks the question: to demand complete knowledge before anything is done is really to refuse to let anything be tried.

It is true, of course, that to act upon incomplete knowledge is to take a risk; but is it not to take risks to sit still, to do nothing, and to let events take their course? In all action (and for the matter of that in all thought as well!) we take the risk that the alternative we choose is the best of those that are open; and if we refuse to act, we run the risk that inaction may run us into greater dangers than any of the acts we contemplated. Such would seem to be our present case. Our social structure rests upon unstable foundations which are slowly giving way. Owing to the failure of its recruiting apparatus and the dysgenic nature of its working, civilization is sliding down a slope of growing steepness which ends

in an abyss : unless something is done to stop it, its decline must end in disaster. Hence the eugenist contends that to postpone intelligent action guided by the best scientific lights, merely because it runs a risk, is an act of folly.

III

The question whether we have not already knowledge enough to save ourselves cannot be solved by merely general and abstract considerations about the incompleteness of our science : it is a question of fact to be determined with reference to the actual and probable consequences of various definite expedients. Now when we view the matter thus, it does not appear either that we know too little, or that the measures called for are impracticable. It is true that we do not know everything ; but we know enough to start on. We have a pretty clear notion of what ails the social order; we know what are the evils to be remedied, and we have before us a number of likely remedies, even though we do not know for certain how effective they may prove. We have therefore a basis for experiment ; and we are surely capable of instruction by the results of our experiments.

Our procedure, therefore, need not differ from that which is observed in the other applications of science to life. We have know-

ledge enough not to rush headlong into rash experiments on a vast scale that might irrevocably compromise a whole society, but to warrant tentative experiments to cope with crying and admitted evils : and if we proceed thus cautiously, we can trust our very experiments to yield us the further knowledge which we need to carry us on to the next step. Indeed, after a certain amount of theorizing, it is *only* by experiment that we can hope to learn what as yet we do not know. There is nothing like action to develop theory.

In order to traverse this contention the critics of eugenics would have to show that we have not, as a matter of fact, knowledge enough to venture on any experiment. But will any of them contend that the whole of our present knowledge of genetics and biology is practically irrelevant, and leaves us just as helpless as the most ignorant savages ? It may well be that we have not knowledge enough to render a particular experiment worth trying with any considerable prospect of success ; but in each case specific reasons should be given for thinking so. Merely general insistence on the defectiveness of human knowledge should no more suffice to deter us than general enthusiasm for eugenics should suffice to exculpate the authors of some foolish experiment that was meant to be eugenical. And when a critic's censures are all based upon such generalities, and always

refuse to enter upon the details of actual proposals, a suspicion arises that he will not consider the case for eugenics, and does not wish to acquire the knowledge needed.

The question whether we have power enough to effect the sort of transformation in the outlook and habits of men which eugenists desire, is not really capable of being discussed in the abstract. It is a question of the adjustment of means and ends. The answer will in every case depend on what is actually proposed, on what means are chosen to realize what ends. But it may first be remarked in a general way that we tend to underestimate the plasticity of human habits, and the individual's submissiveness to social institutions in which he has been trained; the more we study these, the more chary do we grow of setting limits to the scope of social influences. If we declare anything impossible *a priori*, we are very likely to encounter a society in which this impossibility is an accomplished fact. It is, moreover, precisely in matters most relevant to eugenics, in the relations of the sexes, that the most monstrous and unlikely customs are found actually in being. Not even the institutions of Plato's Kallipolis could be declared incapable of realization, if only Plato had contrived to indicate a thinkable first step towards their realization. Once this were granted, the rest might reasonably follow. If

a baby had been born and bred in the Kallipolis, it might be moulded into a nature so different from ours as to love the institutions thereof and to find its happiness therein.

In the second place, with far less knowledge and power than we have, our ancestors have, through terrific struggles and unspeakable hardships, under Providence, managed to evolve into modern man; with our vast and still growing resources, ought we not to be able to improve upon him? Ought we not to go on making ourselves, as our prehuman ancestors have made us, and seeing how we 'boast ourselves to be far better than our fathers', ought we not to make a better job of it? We cannot, in view of our past, deny that we have the power to improve; what is at present lacking is the will. In its moral aspect, therefore, eugenics is the recognition of a duty to carry on the upward urge of evolution: and what we can and ought that surely we shall do.

On the whole, therefore, we may dismiss the fear that a cautiously progressive scheme of eugenical reform will be shattered by any insuperable recalcitrance of nature or human nature.

IV

The eugenical remaking of our nature, then, cannot be pronounced impracticable; but voices are heard which declare it undesirable.

They allege that it is dangerous to tamper with our present nature, and that attempts to do so will assuredly entail doubtful gain and certain loss. In particular they are fond of asserting that genius cannot be bred eugenically, and that if eugenics had succeeded in breeding out all the defects, physical, intellectual, and moral, which now afflict the race, it would be found to have eradicated all its genius as well.

In these assertions is contained a mixture of truth and error, together with a certain confusion of thought. It is true in a sense that no eugenical mating, however excellent, could be guaranteed to produce genius in its offspring. Even if a couple of great geniuses married, it would not be certain that their offspring would have genius. It would not even be probable. It would be more probable that the children would show reversion to the average level of the stock, and unless that level were high, they need not even be remarkably intelligent. For genius appears to depend upon a rare combination of qualities or a rare development of a quality to an unusual height: and having no power to provide for these, we have no right to expect an inheritance of genius. All that any successful scheme of eugenical breeding can be expected to secure is a progressive elevation of the level of intelligence, or of any other quality that is bred for; it may, in consequence, produce ability, and even talent,

in abundance. But genius seems a gift of the gods which transcends talent, and towers far above the level of mankind.

We may admit all this, and yet point out that genius, even though it remains unpredictable, is likely to occur much more frequently in a gifted stock, in which the general level of ability and intelligence is high, than to spring from the loins of ordinary mortals. Just so it is not usual for the highest mountain peaks to rise sheer out of the sea; they occur more commonly as the culminations of high ranges.

But is it not an error thus to treat genius as akin to talent and as naturally rooted in ability? the objector may reply. Is it not rather something abnormal, nay morbid, allied to weakness of body and eccentricity, or even unsoundness, of mind? So that if you eliminate the latter, you will necessarily destroy also the former. There then ensue appeals to lists of geniuses who have been afflicted with weakness and defect of physique and abnormality of mind, and the conclusion is said to be that 'great wits to madness are allied', and that genius springs from insanity or some other subversion of mental equilibrium.

How fallacious this mode of reasoning may be is easily shown by compiling counter-lists of geniuses who were sane and healthy. After comparing them, we may justly doubt whether physical and mental defect is commoner among

geniuses than among ordinary stocks, with the exception perhaps of certain extremes of the artistic temperament, which do seem to be connected with an upset of the mental balance.

There is therefore no proof whatever offered that the defects of a genius are causally connected with his genius, and that he is a better genius for having them. On the contrary, there is much reason to think that they hampered him, and that he would have accomplished incalculably more if he had not suffered from them.

The truth is that the fear of possible losses to mankind from the elimination of feeble-bodied men of genius is a mere bugbear, which has haunted the discussion of eugenics ever since Jowett suggested it as a criticism of Plato's *Republic*. Undoubtedly mankind has owed much to St. Paul, Newton, Kant, and other weaklings. But no attempt is made to show that our indebtedness would not have been incomparably greater if these great men had enjoyed a robuster physique, or that their physical infirmities promoted rather than impeded their spiritual activities. Despite the sturdiness, from which he got his nickname, was not Plato at least as great a philosopher as Kant? And who can prove that Kant's philosophy would not have gained an added flavour if it had been incubated in a better body? Surely, *prima facie* and *ceteris paribus*,

bodily infirmity is a handicap and not an asset. It is conveniently forgotten by such arguments that Napoleon, if he had not been disabled by a pain in his stomach at a critical moment, might have won at Waterloo, and that Pascal's *Pensées* would not have suffered if he had lived to revise them. It is conveniently forgotten, further, that with just a little more physical debility all these geniuses who were crippled by their health would not have been able to achieve anything at all, and that for lack of a little more adequate bodily equipment much ability has always been lost to the world. What of the waste of men like the ' bridled ' Theages, whom Plato esteemed as the only true philosopher in Athens (except himself) ? They have left no memorial of their powers, and have remained pathetically ineffective, as though they had never been. Nor again are tears shed upon the tombs of geniuses whose physique was so defective that they died in infancy and never lived to manifest their superiority even to their friends.

Lastly, is there not every probability that a eugenical society would produce as much genius (or rather far more !) from its sane and healthy stocks as dysgenical societies now produce from their tainted and uncertain sources ? Anyhow, it is so little genius that we get at present, and we make such a wretched use of it, that the entirely conjectural loss ascribed to

eugenics need scarcely enter into our calculations. Indeed the chances of obtaining genius would be enormously improved by diminishing the shocking waste and elimination of ability which is now promoted by our social order in the very regions most fitted and likely to engender genius, to wit, in the best stocks of our upper classes.

V

In the end, however, few allow their opinions on a question to be determined wholly by the merits of abstract theory, without being affected by the bearing of that theory on their personal tastes and predilections. And it admits of little doubt that the most obstinate prejudices against eugenics rest upon such personal objections. Eugenical schemes, as they are usually presented, seem often to affront the love of liberty, and to demand altogether intolerable amounts of social repression and regulation and of the coercion of recalcitrants.

These objections would hold, no doubt, against the high-handed, Platonic type of social reform, for which the question is ever one of all or nothing; but they do not apply to the gradual and progressive procedure which we have advocated, and which alone is practicable. For from the practical point of view it stands to reason that the amount of coercion which can be applied in any society is strictly

limited, simply because if it is spread over too large an area, or provokes too bitter opposition, its effectiveness is lost. A law that runs counter to the feelings and habits of the large majority becomes a dead letter. Even a strong minority can usually defy and reduce to absurdity a law to which it is resolutely hostile. Hence America's constitutional Prohibition has become the laughing-stock of the world; but what is worse is that it appears to be having a devastatingly dysgenical effect by challenging the youth of the upper classes to alcoholize themselves out of pure bravado. In passing every law, therefore, the legislature should most anxiously consider how much criminality it is thereby fabricating, and what the incidental and ulterior consequences of its work are likely to be; in short it should realize that by trying to do too much it will effect nothing or less.

We may, however, credit eugenists with intelligence to recognize these limitations of legislative power. They will never attempt the impossible. They will never impose restrictions which they cannot enforce. They will never, for example, deprive more than an infinitesimal section of the population of the existing right to dump its worthless progeny on the community, any more than they will reward the excellence of more than a very small proportion with the honours of eugenical nobility. But in both cases this very small proportion

will suffice to attain their object, and the success of their scheme will not call for more. For it is essential to its operation that it should be *progressive*, and if in every generation the worst one per cent of the population is eliminated and the best one per cent is stimulated to double its numbers, the improvement in the social personnel will be very rapid.

Actually such a society would very soon come to compare favourably with any that exists, in this very matter of restriction and repression. For most people hardly realize what large amounts of social regulation and repression are needed to cope with our existing masses of criminality, disease, insanity, and feeble-mindedness. Most of this repression would become superfluous in a eugenical society, in which criminality and insanity would have been eliminated, and disease and stupidity would have been reduced to manageable and ever-lessening proportions. Thus the objection that eugenics would institute a social tyranny, watching and controlling every act of every citizen, has very little in it.

VI

There remains, however, one final and most formidable prejudice against eugenics in the breast of the man in the street. He deeply resents any attempt to control his love-affairs,

to dictate to his affections, to restrict his freedom to bestow them how he likes and where he likes. This is certainly the most deeply rooted and most obstinate of all anti-eugenical prejudices, even though it may turn out to be the least intelligent. Once more its origin must be debited to Plato. For even the man in the street has heard rumours of the Kallipolis, and so the word 'eugenics' at once sets him thinking of 'human stud-farms', and of the figure he himself would cut therein, and he decides to approve or denounce eugenics accordingly. Even Mr. J. B. S. Haldane (who of course knows better) at times panders to this prejudice, and pokes fun at "the eugenic official, a compound of the policeman, the priest, and the procurer", who is to "hale us off at suitable intervals to the local temple of Venus Genetrix, with a partner chosen, one gathers, by something of the nature of a glorified Medical Board".[1]

The people who conceive a prejudice against eugenics from fear of such bogies can never have reflected for a moment on the ways society employs to influence its members and to guide them in the way they should go. They have never perceived how continuously they are being deluded, cajoled, bullied, tricked, and trained, until they fully accept the current social standards and valuations, and conform

[1] *Daedalus*, p. 41.

their choice to them. They actually seem to suppose that they are free to marry whom they will (and who will take them), because no policeman stands over them with a loaded revolver at the critical points in the marriage service. It never occurs to them that they live in the grip of a caste-system only a little less rigid than the Indian, which prescribes, in general terms, whom it is proper and possible to marry, and whom not. Nor do they realize that in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred they themselves fully approve, accept, and endorse the verdicts of their caste, and never dream of revolting against them. A wild young peer may occasionally break loose, and elope with a Gaiety actress, but he does not foresee the penalties his caste will exact, and he will have to pay, to atone for his folly. The scene of the next act is generally laid in the divorce court. In more bourgeois circles men are much more conventional, that is, much less free, and less capable of breaking the bonds of social custom. Or consider the case of the girl of good family who elopes with her groom or her chauffeur!

But society does not merely bully. It also works upon us much more subtly. It has the cunning to invent institutions which cast a glamour, and make their beneficiaries appear desirable in our eyes. Rank and Riches are two such institutions, and it seems a thousand

pities that they are bestowed in such random fashion, and with so little regard to eugenic merit. Yet their efficacy is indisputable. Who will not gladly swallow the hook that is baited with them? Where is the young man who would not rather meet a princess (or an heiress) than a kitchen-maid, and would not be far more easily attracted by her? If she is even passably pretty, he will find it quite easy to fall in love with her. Yet the kitchen-maid he scorns may actually be prettier, healthier, and eugenically more commendable. Again, what about the manners and modes of speech which distinguish the princess from the kitchen-maid? Are they not also products of social training? Is not their function to attract in the princess, and to repel in the kitchen-maid? It is only in the fairy-tale that the princess can play the Cinderella and pass for a kitchen-maid; in real life, if the kitchen-maid dressed up as a princess, she would drop her h's where a princess would only drop her eyes, and would leave Prince Charming under no illusion.

Similarly when it comes to the question of parenthood and to the perverseness of the differential birth-rate, society does not brusquely say to the desirable parents whose stock is being extirpated, 'You shall not have more than two children', and to the undesirables, 'Go to, and have as many as you can'. It says nothing of the sort, and is as silent as Brer Rabbit.

But it goes quietly to work, and makes the arrangements and institutions and customs, which act as motives sufficient to produce these pernicious results.

Is it sufficiently clear then that the ordinary man is deceived when he supposes that he does as he pleases and chooses as he wills? He fails to perceive that he is penetrated and pervaded by a social atmosphere, which moulds him and holds him together: its pressure, like that of the air, is usually unfelt, just because it envelops him on every side. But were he to be suddenly taken out of it, he would lose his shape and go to pieces, just like a deep-sea fish when taken to the surface.

If now it is admitted that our existing society, foolish and mistaken and unintelligent as it is in many ways, is yet astute enough to manage its members with such ease, why should it be imagined that a eugenical society will have recourse to clumsy methods of coercion? Why should it show less skill and tact? Surely it will adopt, adapt, and perfect the social methods now in vogue, and use them so as to minister to its eugenically salutary ends. It will create a social atmosphere which is pervasively eugenical, from which all will unwittingly breathe in, and breathe out, eugenical emotions, sentiments, and judgments; so all will spontaneously assume eugenic points of view, and naturally act eugenically. In such a society

Rank and Riches will have eugenical significance, and will be rewards of real intrinsic merit. They will make propaganda for eugenics as in our existing social order they do for senseless snobbishness, and will express real social values instead of imaginary ones.

Similarly in such a society the promotion of eugenically desirable unions will not be effected by coercion or administrative orders. These will not be required. For the eugenist will take a leaf out of the book of society's present practice. Instead of preaching to Cupid or trying to browbeat him, he will cultivate his taste, and gently guide his arrow's aim. For he will teach him to admire different qualities, socially more wholesome, with the result that he will admire different persons. Thus every one will fall in love as before, and will feel as free as now to choose whom he admires; only he will love better qualities and choose better partners. It is entirely possible, therefore, to combine freedom with eugenics.

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By

Ferdinand Canning Scott Schiller

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